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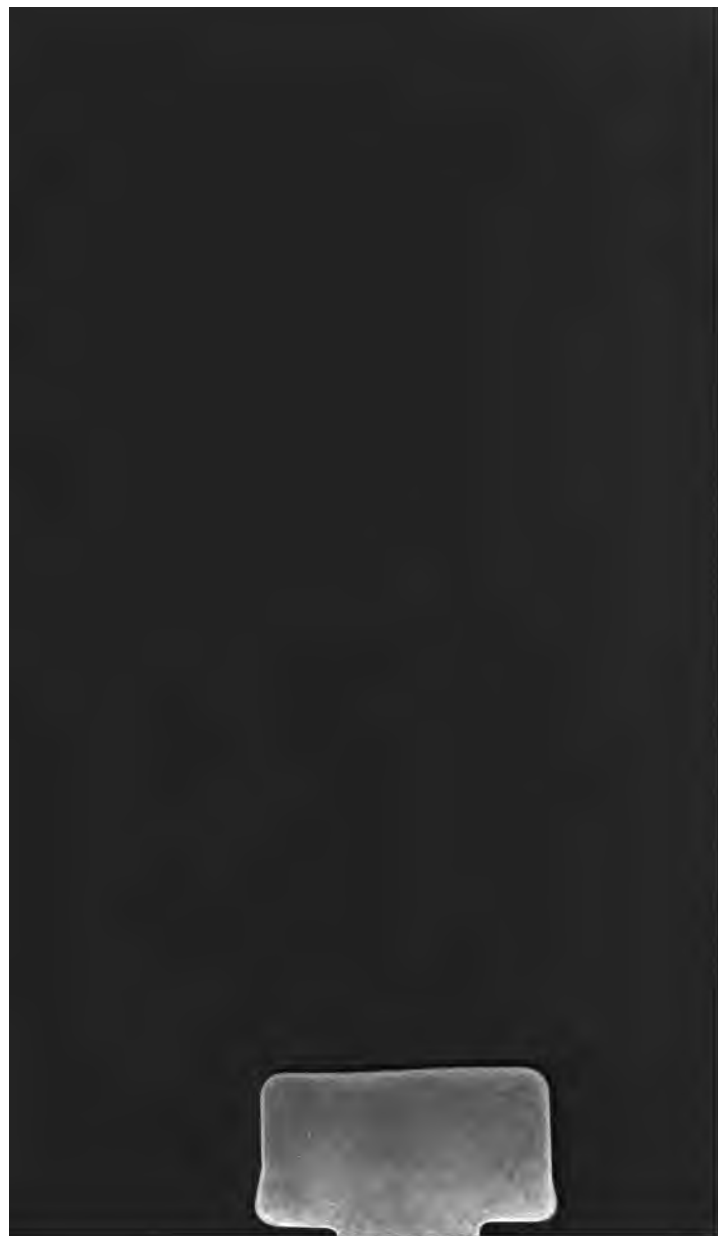
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*LECTURES ON THE
REVELATION OF ST JOHN.*



LECTURES

ON THE

REVELATION OF ST JOHN.

BY

C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.

MASTER OF THE TEMPLE.

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LECTURE XX.

REVELATION XII. 5, 6.

*Her child was caught up unto God and to His throne.
And the woman fled into the wilderness.*

It was on the 23rd of June that we last closed our meditations on this Book, at the end of the 11th chapter. The vision of the seven trumpets, like the earlier vision of the seven seals, had evidently brought us to *the end of all things*¹. We have seen in the Book of Revelation thus far, and we shall see in it hereafter, not so much one continuous stream of prophecy, starting from the times of St John, and carrying down the fortunes of the Church with historical precision till they are finally lost in the great ocean of eternity; but rather a number of parallel streams, each marked by some definite purpose and principle, and each ending only with the end of time, even with that last discomfiture of the opposing powers of evil which shall introduce the universal reign

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 7.

of Christ, and usher in the *new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness*¹.

We shall not be surprised therefore to observe in the section now to be opened a return to a very elementary point in the history of the Church of God. The general subject of the three chapters which form this section is, The enemies, the three enemies, of Christ's Church. We shall find that this also is a passage complete in itself, and ending only with the same catastrophe of the powers of evil which we have already observed as the termination of the vision of the seals in the 1st verse of the 8th chapter, and of the vision of the trumpets in the last verse of the 11th. Our subject to-night will be the first six verses of the 12th chapter. Join your prayers with mine, my brethren, that our resumption of the study of this Divine Book may be fruitful, not in curious speculation and not in intellectual gratification, but above and before all else in the quickening of our Christian vigilance, and in the increase of our knowledge of God in His Son our Lord Jesus Christ.

And² a great sign was seen in the heaven. A wonder might be a mere marvel; a surprise ending with itself: a sign is a signal; it points to something; it denotes something; it has a meaning, and it has an object. In the heaven; that is the stage on which everything passes before the eye of the Apostle. We read at the opening of the 4th chapter, A door was opened in heaven, and the first voice said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 13.

² Verse 1.

which must be hereafter. The heavenly stage, on which many groups of actors have before presented themselves, is occupied now, to the eye of the seer, with a new portent.

A woman clothed with the sun; enveloped in that dazzling light which is the emblem of the divine glory. *And the moon is beneath her feet:* all borrowed, all reflected light, is too mean to be the characteristic of her upon whom the glory of God Himself has been bestowed. *Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*¹.

And on her head is a crown of twelve stars. The number twelve is throughout this book indicative of the Church. *The city had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels...The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*². Even in the *four and twenty elders* of the 4th chapter we recognize the twice twelve: they are the representatives of the Church under both its dispensations; the twelve Patriarchs of the Jewish, and the twelve Apostles of the Christian. It is thus here. The woman clothed with the sun, and having on her head a crown of twelve stars, is the Church of God; the Church, regarded as one whole from the days of Abraham, perhaps we may say from the day of the Fall itself, under whatever special dispensation placed, the Patriarchal, the Israelite, or the Christian.

*And*³ *being with child she crieth, travailing, and tor-*

¹ Isai. lx. 1.

² Rev. xxi. 12, 14.

³ Verse 2.

tured to bear. In sorrow, it was written of old, *thou shalt bring forth children*¹. Not without anguish, an anguish of preparatory anticipation and an anguish of present endurance, does the Church herself bring forth her children. The greater and the more momentous the birth, the stronger the agony through which it is accomplished.

*And*² *there was seen another sign in the heaven: and behold, a great red dragon*. Red, as the colour of fire, and as the colour of blood³. Red, as the emblem of the waster and destroyer, as the emblem of him who *was a murderer from the beginning*⁴. The dragon is that fabulous monster of whom ancient poets told as *huge in size, coiled like a snake, blood-red in colour or shot with changing tints*, insatiable in voracity and ever athirst for human blood. In the Old Testament the dragon first appears in the 74th Psalm as the representative of all sea animals: *Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength; Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters*⁵. And so in the 91st Psalm, among the various instances of the power and security of the godly, this occurs as the completion and crown of all: *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet*⁶. And thus, when the literal sea is exchanged for the figurative, for that surging multitude of peoples and nations which *lifts up its voice* against God even as *the floods lift up their waves*⁷; the dragon becomes the fit emblem for the leader and ruler of the

¹ Gen. iii. 16.

² Verse 3.

³ 2 Kings iii. 22.

⁴ John viii. 44.

⁵ Psalm lxxiv. 13.

⁶ Psalm xci. 13.

⁷ Psalm xciii. 3.

world's aggressions upon the Church of God. Thus the dragon represents in various passages of the prophets of the Old Testament¹ that great Egyptian power which had been the first oppressor of the Church of Israel. And thus with equal fitness it becomes in this Book of Revelation the title of that *prince of this world*² whose deep and bitter hostility to God and His Christ prompts all the efforts and frames all the machinations by which the world seeks to undermine the influence of the Saviour and of His people. The dragon is henceforth another name for the devil or Satan.

He is further described here as *having seven heads, and ten horns*, probably upon the seventh head, *and upon his heads seven diadems*. We shall have more to say of these emblems hereafter. At present it will suffice to notice that, though there is a unity of person in the arch-enemy of God, he is yet in his operations a many-headed power; he exercises his influence through many channels; every phase of the ungodly antichristian world is one of his manifestations: and further, the power which is thus various and thus multiplied is also a strength; it possesses ten horns, the scriptural emblem of vigour and force: we cannot despise the power of evil, though we may forbode its downfall. The prince of this world, as here portrayed, has seven heads and ten horns, and upon his seven heads seven crowns. God would never have us disparage the power of our great enemy, or the magnitude of that danger which arises out of it.

¹ Isai. li. 9. Ezek. xxix. 3.

² John xiv. 30.

And¹ his tail sweeps the third part of the stars of the heaven, and cast them to the earth. The figure is found in the 8th chapter of the prophet Daniel, where it is said of the power designated as *the little horn* of the he-goat, that *it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them².* It is a figure expressive of great arrogance and great success. The dragon exercises so great an empire that it is as though his very tail could sweep down a third part, that is, a large portion, of the stars of heaven, and throw them upon the earth. The prince of this world, who is the devil, lords it for the present over his subjects; and gives some colour to his arrogant boast before the Saviour, *All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it³.*

And the dragon stands in presence of the woman who was about to bear, that whenever she has born he may devour her child. It is like Pharaoh watching for the infant life of Moses: it is like Herod planning the destruction of the infant life of Jesus. These kings were agents of the dragon; illustrating the sort of eagerness with which Satan himself plots against the Redeemer and against His Church. Most of all did his wrath arise when now the impending advent of the Saviour to the Church and to the world was threatening the very existence of his own permitted and usurped power. Such is the point of time to which the verse now before us

¹ Verse 4.

² Dan. viii. 10.

³ Luke iv. 6.

directs our attention; the incarnation, the nativity, the first advent, of Christ.

And¹ she bore a man child, who is to shepherd (rule) all the nations in (with) an iron rod. When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law². That, I need scarcely say, is the event here described. The Church itself, which has been one, I would repeat, from the beginning, whatever the particular dispensation under which God might place it, is here said, in a figure, to have born the Saviour. It is a figure, but an expressive one. Christ, as a Man, was born of the Church, as well as to it.

And who was He? What was the destiny, as marked out by prophecy, of Him who thus entered a world of sin, *in all things save sin only made like³ unto men?* It is He of whom it was written in the 2nd Psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee: Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession: Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel⁴.* The child born of a woman, born of God's Church, is the destined ruler of a universal empire. *All Thine enemies shall feel Thy hand: Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee⁵.*

And her child was caught away unto God and to His throne. The years of infancy and boyhood, the years

¹ Verse 5.

² Gal. iv. 4, 5.

³ Heb. ii. 17.

⁴ Psalm ii. 7—9.

⁵ Psalm xxi. 8.

of youth and of manhood, the workshop of Nazareth, the journeyings to Jerusalem, the call of disciples, the labours of teaching and of healing, the *cruel mocking and scourging*¹, the bitter cross and the quiet grave, all are passed over: He who *declares the end from the beginning*² speaks here but of birth and of ascension, and tells us only that, while the dragon stood in readiness to devour the child which should be born, the child was caught up unto God and to His throne.

*And*³ *the woman*, the mother of that child, the Church of which and to which He was born, *fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place there prepared from (on the part of) God, that there they may nurture her during a thousand two hundred and sixty days*. The child is caught up to God and to His throne. The woman flees into the wilderness. Like Israel of old fleeing from the wrath of Pharaoh, the Church of God, whose Lord and Master has been taken up from her, finds a dwelling-place in her desolation in the wilderness. There, like Israel of old, she has food provided for her of God; *bread from heaven to eat*⁴, and water of life from the stricken rock. The period of her abode is described in figures now familiar to us. The twelve hundred and sixty days are the same period during which God's two witnesses prophesy clothed in sackcloth. It is the same period, otherwise described as one of forty and two months, during which the holy city is trodden underfoot of the Gentiles⁵. It is the same period, otherwise

¹ Heb. xi. 36.

² Isai. xlv. 10.

³ Verse 6.

⁴ John vi. 31.

⁵ Rev. xi. 2, 3.

described as one of three years and a half, of *a time and times and half a time*¹, during which our Lord's own ministry upon earth was protracted, and after which *the spirit of life from God entered into* the two dead witnesses and *they ascended up to heaven in a cloud* while *their enemies beheld them*². It is, in short, that period, of the three and a half, the half seven, the broken and imperfect as opposed to the complete and sacred whole, which is again and again the designation of the reign of evil, of the humiliation of God's truth and of God's Church, as contrasted with that endless triumph of the cause of holiness and of Christ which shall comfort the sufferings of Zion and redress the wrongs of the saints.

Such, my brethren, is the thought which has been made our text for this evening. Christ already exalted to the throne of God: the Church an exile in the wilderness, but provided there with a dwellingplace and a nurture which testify even in her sorrows to the care and the love of a Father, a Saviour, and a Comforter. A few concluding words will rise naturally out of this contrast.

1. And, first, as to the safety and the glory of Christ Himself. He *rests from His labours*³. He is free from temptation. He is comforted from His sorrows. This is something. Something, for those who love Him, to know that He who once bore shame and grief for us, is now *set down at the right hand of the throne of God*⁴.

¹ Rev. xii. 14.

² Rev. xi. 11, 12.

³ Rev. xiv. 13.

⁴ Heb. xii. 2.

In that victory, in that calm, in that glory, is the promise and the foretaste of our own. We, too, if we *be faithful unto death*¹, shall one day *be with Him and behold His glory*².

2. Again, as to the power of Christ at present over evil and for His Church. If He is where we believe Him to be, He must indeed be *mighty to save*³. *All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth*; and He says Himself, *Lo, I am with you alway*⁴. Trust in Him, look to Him, serve Him, *and nothing shall by any means hurt you*⁵: *neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come. All are yours, for ye are Christ's*⁶.

3. Once more, as to our proper place and proper state in this world. The woman, that is, the Church, fled into the wilderness. It is there, in the desert, that a place is prepared for her of God. It is there that her work lies, and it is there that her happiness will be found. My brethren, it has been the misfortune, and it has been the misery, and it has been the sin, of the professed Church in all times, that she would not stay there. She would not rest where God had prepared a place for her. She would, in heart at least, *turn back again into Egypt*⁷. Or, if she could not get back, she would make her wilderness as like Egypt as possible. She would sit there at one time depressed and languid, remembering the fleshpots which were denied her. She would rise at another time, and make her tents one vast

¹ Rev. ii. 10.

² John xvii. 24.

³ Isai. lxiii. 1.

⁴ Matt. xxviii. 18, 20.

⁵ Luke x. 19.

⁶ 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

⁷ Acts vii. 39.

bazaar, in which all the finery and all the luxury of Egypt should be simulated and parodied. You all know how the Church has copied and flattered the world. You all know how unwilling our own individual hearts are to recognize and to acquiesce in our true position as strangers, pilgrims, sojourners upon earth¹. It is no vain parable which bids us this night remember who we are and where; occupants of a shifting station, not dwellers in a permanent home. If for us the Child, the Child divine and human, the Man Christ Jesus, has indeed been caught up to God and to His throne; then there, with Him, where He dwells, where He sitteth at God's right hand, there, and not here, is our home and our citizenship. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above*².

4. But, yet again, though *we have here no continuing city but seek one to come*³, let us not forget the comforting and inspiring assurance that God Himself has here provided for us not only a sojourn but a nurture. *That they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days*. Alas for that ingratitude which makes light of God's provision for us! For Israel of old, during his sojourn in the wilderness, He provided *bread from heaven to eat*⁴—*angels' food* He calls it⁵—and a supply of water from the hard barren rock. He provided a cloud to go before them, *and fire to give them light in the night season*⁶. He gave them also His statutes and ordinances, speaking to them by man's voice, and reveal-

¹ Heb. xi. 13.² Col. iii. 1.³ Heb. xiii. 14.⁴ John vi. 31.⁵ Psalm lxxviii. 25.⁶ Psalm cv. 38.

ing to them His righteous and loving will. Has He done less than this for the Church of Christ in her exile? *What could have been done more that He has not done for us*¹? He has given His holy Word to be *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path*². He has given us His voice within, the voice of an instructed and enlightened conscience, saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it*, when we are turning aside to the right hand or to the left³. He has given us ordinances of a pure and spiritual worship; words of prayer, sound and fervent; sacraments, to teach the soul through the senses, and to be the link between the life that is seen and the life that is unseen. He has promised to hear when we pray, and wherever but *two or three are gathered together in His name, there to be in the midst of them*⁴. He has given us, above all, His Holy Spirit, to be the light and the guide, to be the Comforter and the Sanctifier, of all who believe. If for the present He has denied us sight, He has given us in its stead that which for us at present is far better; that faith which is *the assurance of things hoped for*, that faith which is *the evidence of things not seen*⁵. If with these things given we are still thankless and careless; if we despise His ordinances, if we turn away from His table; if we leave His Word unread, His gift of conscience unheeded; if we *count the blood of the covenant wherewith we were sanctified an unholy thing, and do despite even unto the Spirit of grace*⁶; *neither should we be persuaded*⁷,

¹ Isai. v. 4.² Psalm cxix. 105.³ Isai. xxx. 21.⁴ Matt. xviii. 20.⁵ Heb. xi. 1.⁶ Heb. x. 29.⁷ Luke xvi. 31.

neither should we be convinced, neither should we be converted, though the sight of Christ Himself in heaven were flashed upon our eye, or the yawning gulf of hell revealed suddenly beneath our feet!

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation¹, or turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven²?

¹ Heb. ii. 3.

² Heb. xii. 25.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY,
November 3, 1861.

LECTURE XXI.

REVELATION XII. 7.

There was war in heaven.

THE Child is caught up to God and to His throne, and His mother flees into the wilderness to escape from the disappointed fury of the dragon. That was the parable which we sought to interpret two Sundays ago. Nor was the interpretation, by the help of Scripture, difficult. The woman clothed with the sun and crowned with twelve stars bore the infallible tokens of the Church of God. The child destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron could be no other than He to whom it was said in the language of prophecy in the 2nd Psalm, *Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession: Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*¹. The Saviour born to the Church is also, in another point of view,

¹ Psalm ii. 8, 9.

born of her. And He whom the dragon had been standing ready to devour, is caught away out of his reach, even to the throne of God in heaven. The point of time which we have thus reached, in the retrospect presented in the early verses of the chapter, is the Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We have seen Him safely housed in heaven, placed beyond the assaults alike of suffering and of temptation, restored to *the glory which He had with the Father before the world was*¹; and we were called to rejoice in the thought of that safety which He has already attained, and which contains within it the very pledge and promise of our own. Meanwhile the Church remains below; remains in the wilderness, where she has a place and a nurture provided for her of God, and where at a future time we shall read something more of her perils, her safeguards, and her consolations.

But to-night our eyes are taught to follow the track of the ascending Son, and to notice that which accompanies His return into the presence of God and into the glory which for our sakes He had deserted. I will first read to you the whole passage, and then go back to comment upon so much of it as may fall within the space and time allotted to us.

And² there became (arose) a war in the heaven; Michael and his angels to war with the dragon: and the dragon warred, and his angels; and³ they availed not, they had not strength for the contest, nor was place of them found any

¹ John xvii. 5.

² Verse 7.

³ Verse 8.

longer in the heaven. And¹ he was thrown, the great dragon, the ancient serpent, he that is called the devil (slanderer), and Satan (the adversary), he who leads astray the whole world, he was thrown upon the earth, and his angels were thrown with him. And² I heard a great voice in the heaven saying, Now is become (come to pass) the salvation and the might and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because the accuser of our brethren is thrown down, he who accused them before our God by day and by night. And³ they conquered him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their life unto, as far as, up to the very extent of, death. Therefore⁴ rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that tabernacle therein: Woe to the earth and to the sea! because the devil (slanderer) is gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short season.

Let us take the various points in order.

There arose a war in heaven. The Child was caught up unto God and to His throne; and then the Evangelist sees a war in heaven. The stage which was formerly occupied by the visions accompanying the opening of the seven seals and the blowing of the seven trumpets, and on which lately were seen the woman travailing in birth and the dragon watching for her delivery, is now tenanted by contending armies; Michael and his angels warring against the devil and his angels. It is some-

¹ Verse 9.

³ Verse 11.

² Verse 10.

⁴ Verse 12.

thing which follows upon the completion of the earthly work of Jesus and His return into the heavenly places.

Let us look at the contending forces. On the one side the leader is the person designated as Michael. This name is found altogether five times in Scripture. Twice in the 10th chapter of the prophet Daniel, where he appears under the somewhat vague titles of *Michael one of the chief princes*, and again, *Michael your prince*¹. Again in the 12th chapter of the same book. *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever*². I quote this passage at length, because the connexion there assigned to the person designated as Michael with the subject of the general resurrection and the final judgment seems to point to an interpretation of the passage now before us which appears to be alone adequate and satisfactory. The remaining occurrence of the name is in the Epistle of St Jude, where it is found in this combination, *Michael the archangel, or the chief (or ruler) of angels*³.

¹ Dan. x. 13, 21.

² Dan. xii. 1—3.

³ Jude 9.

I would not speak with positiveness upon a point not decided by Revelation. But I am inclined to believe that Michael is here a name for our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We have already had Him described, in one aspect, under the figure of a Lamb; in relation at once to His innocence and to His sacrifice. In another aspect, He has been portrayed as a human child, the promised seed of the woman; in reference to His incarnation and to the reality of His manhood. Here, again, it may well be that He is spoken of as the Lord of Angels; as *the great Prince which standeth for the children of His people*¹; in regard to his conflict with the powers of evil, and His victory over *the prince of this world*². And thus, without entering into the question whether the name may be uniformly restricted to our Lord alone, or whether, like other names under which He is presented in this book, it may also have another use as the title of one of his holy Angels, we may, I think, consider that, when we read of a conflict between Michael and his angels on the one side, and the devil and his angels on the other, we are reading of a warfare in which Christ Himself is engaged, a warfare in which Christ alone could lead on the combatants to victory.

And now what does Scripture teach us as to the time and circumstances of this conflict? of this downfall of Satan, as it were, from heaven to earth?

There is one passage, in the Gospel of St Luke, of which the verses before us are (if we might say so with

¹ Dan. xii. 1.

² John xiv. 30.

reverence) a mere expanded paraphrase. The seventy disciples have just returned from their mission, reporting that *even the devils are subject unto them through the name of Jesus*. And He said unto them, *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*. And He goes on to give them *authority over all the power of the enemy*¹. Thus the sacred text has also a divine interpreter. Satan thrown out of heaven is a figure expressive of a loss of power. To fall from heaven to earth is to undergo a forfeiture of supremacy without a forfeiture of existence; a defeat but not a destruction; a weakening but not an extinction.

And to this agree several other passages of the New Testament. Thus we read in the 11th chapter of the same Gospel. *When the strong one fully armed guards his own hall, his goods are at peace; but when the stronger than he has come against him and conquered him, He taketh away his complete armour on which he trusted, and divideth his spoils*². How exactly is this the conflict and the victory described in the words before us!

Again, in the 12th chapter of St John's Gospel. *Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*. And this He said, signifying by what death He was to die³. Observe (1) the very figure of the *casting out*; and (2) the combination of this with the death by crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Once more, in the 16th chapter of St John. *When He, the Comforter, is come, He will reprove (convict) the*

¹ Luke x. 17—19.

² Luke xi. 21, 22.

³ John xii. 31—33.

*world...concerning judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged*¹. Sentence is already passed upon him, though not yet finally executed.

Yet again, in the 2nd chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. *Forasmuch then as the children, spoken of in the last quotation from the 8th chapter of the prophet Isaiah, are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same: that by means of death He might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver all those who by fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*².

O the wonderful harmony (when rightly interpreted) of the Word of God! (1) The seventy disciples by the power of Jesus had dealt a fatal blow, to the extent of their mission, upon the power of evil. They had set free bodies and souls *which Satan had bound*³ through long years in disease or sin. In these things the Saviour saw, not by anticipation only, the fall of Satan from his usurped dominion. (2) Still more decisively was this downfall enacted in the words and works of His own ministry as a whole. Then indeed did *the stronger than the strong man armed* enter into the guarded hall, and scatter possessions till then securely kept. (3) But in a higher sense than either of these was the sacrifice of the death of Christ a casting out of Satan from his heaven. Then was it, in that great consummation of the work of redemption, that Satan lost his subjects and the Saviour drew them to Himself. That was (in

¹ John xvi. 8, 11.

² Heb. ii. 14, 15.

³ Luke xiii. 16.

the language of the primeval prophecy) a *bruising of the serpent's head*¹ at the moment and in the very act of his fancied triumph. That was indeed the very judgment of the prince of this world. From that time forth he was a condemned and sentenced criminal; from that time forth the world which still served him was *convicted concerning his judgment*² by every single operation of the Spirit of truth in teaching, quickening, or comforting, however long might be the interval between the sentence and the punishment, between the judgment and the execution. (4) But, above all, and with a truth yet beyond these, was the glorious Ascension of Christ the casting out from their heaven of the devil and his angels. *When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive*³; *angels and authorities and powers, evil no less than good, were then made subject unto Him*⁴; it was when the Divine Child, the Man Christ Jesus, was at last *caught up unto God and to His throne*, that there arose that decisive war in heaven in which the dragon and his angels fought and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.

This is that conflict and that victory of which the text tells us. There was, we doubt not, an earlier struggle and an earlier defeat. God made all things upright: if there be one intelligent and moral being who is now the enemy of good, that being must have fallen; that being is not as God made him; that being has corrupted himself, and departed by whatever steps

¹ Gen. iii. 15.² John xvi. 11.³ Eph. iv. 8.⁴ 1 Pet. iii. 22.

from an original righteousness. We believe not in the existence from the first of two antagonist powers, one wholly good, and one wholly evil. We account not for the origin of evil: we leave it as one of those *secret things*, one of those really inscrutable mysteries, with which Revelation has not dealt, which *belong wholly to the Lord our God*¹. But one faint glimpse or two we do perceive in Scripture of a fall from good affecting not man only. Our Lord tells us, in the 8th chapter of St John, that the devil *abode not in the truth*²; continued not in that light of holiness in which he was first created and made. And St Peter speaks, in his 2nd Epistle, of *God not sparing angels when they sinned, but casting them down to hell, and delivering them to chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*³. And St Jude echoing the same language says, *And the angels which kept not their first estate—their own beginning is the exact expression—but deserted their proper habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*⁴. These things we accept in their simplicity; we read and fear. We see in them a new proof of the malignity of sin: that evil which could enter God's presence must indeed be audacious, must indeed be powerful. We see in them a new proof of God's righteous judgment: if God spared not angels when they sinned, *take heed lest He also spare not thee*⁵. We see in them a new proof of the magnitude of our own spiritual dangers; compassed about

¹ Deut. xxix. 29.² John viii. 44.³ 2 Pet. ii. 4.⁴ Jude 6.⁵ Rom. xi. 21.

not more with abounding mercies than with schemes and stratagems of invisible foes¹. Well may these thoughts add earnestness to our prayers, and intensity to our watchfulness.

But with this earlier and more mysterious warfare the text is remotely concerned. It may be that the language before us is tinged and coloured from that ancient history; but its own import is that which we have already assigned to it. The place of the transaction is its interpreter. The Child, divine at once and human, after incarnation, after temptation, after suffering, after crucifixion, after resurrection, after manifestation to His witnesses who are to proclaim Him to the world, has at length been caught up to God and to His throne. Victories won below, by Himself and by His disciples, over the spiritual hosts of evil; bodies released from suffering, souls from possession; words of truth spoken, deeds of mercy done; a perfect example set of patience, of holiness, of humanity, of godliness; a life of contempt and obloquy crowned by a death of shame and anguish, and then reversed by a blessed and glorious resurrection; these things, in their various parts and degrees, have struck a deadly blow at the throne and empire of evil, and justified to the full the song of anticipative triumph, *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*². But when, after all these things done and borne, the Conqueror Himself arises in the crowning miracle of the Ascension, and strikes at the

¹ Eph. vi. 12.

² Luke x. 18.

heavenly portals for admission as *the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle*¹; when He takes His seat in heaven, not for Himself alone, but as the Mediator and Intercessor of all who believe; when, in fulfilment of His most true promise, He proceeds to claim from His Father the gift of His Holy Spirit to carry on in individual hearts below *the good fight of faith*² and the transforming work of sanctification; then at last, then most decisively, did Michael the great Prince stand up for His people against the enemy and the destroyer; then did He realize to the full the scene afterwards disclosed in vision to the eye of His Apostle and Evangelist, *There arose a war in heaven, on the stage of prophetic manifestation, Michael and His angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.*

My brethren, the small portion of the passage to which our thoughts have been confined may suggest to us two or three important reflections before we conclude.

Do not imagine that because the war in heaven is ended and ended well, therefore the war on earth is over too. Nothing can be so fatal as a false security. It is true, Christ has conquered; and you know through what severe, what protracted, what cruel conflicts. And it is true that in thus conquering He conquered not for Himself alone. He was not only *bearing our griefs*³, but also fighting our battles. And when He had almost reached

¹ Psalm xxiv. 8.

² 1 Tim. vi. 12.

³ Isai. liii. 4.

the end of the long struggle He said, *The prince of this world is judged*¹; *now shall the prince of this world be cast out*². But remember, there is all the difference between a victory secured to those who will fight, and a victory certain and safe whether we fight or fight not. Christ cast Satan from his throne: but He did so for those who are His, His by a living faith, His by a careful obedience; not for those who just call Him *Lord, Lord*, but *do not* in any sense *the things which He says*³. Christ is *the Captain of our salvation*⁴; but only soldiers have a Captain; only fighting men can conquer. We shall hear on a future day that, so far from being annihilated, the power of Satan is rather stimulated by defeat: it is as if he were come down to earth with added wrath *because he knows that he has but a short time*. Thus then the first question for all of us is, Am I a fighting man? If not, the victory of Christ cannot be mine.

And therefore I would say to undecided persons—by which I mean persons who have not yet consciously enlisted themselves in God's service under Christ's banner—I would that you might be persuaded, by His grace working with the Word, to see what a formidable, what a tremendous struggle is really going on, whether you take part in it or no, between the condemned but not yet executed evil one, and the glorified but not yet unresisted Saviour. Half and more than half of our vacillation and of our lukewarmness in the things of the soul arises from

¹ John xvi. 11.² John xii. 31.³ Luke vi. 46.⁴ Heb. ii. 10.

shutting our eyes to the war which is raging around us. We soften down the expressions of Scripture till they mean anything or nothing. We give new names to old sins, and think that we have changed their character by a mere change of title. We misplace or misread the claims of Christian charity, and make a merit of indulgence towards frailty, and almost of connivance at sin. And even this is not all nor the chief part of the evil. Our own inner self is infected by it. We try to drift easily down the stream of life, seeing everything in bright colours, amusing ourselves as we go, and avoiding everything that might trouble our repose or shake our security and self-confidence. And this kind of life is very pleasant, very alluring: it is tranquillizing in itself, and it makes us very agreeable one to another. But is it, is it—for that is the real question—is it true? is it what God commands? is it what God approves? Open His Holy Word where you will; in its histories or in its prophecies, in its Psalms or in its Proverbs, in its Gospels or in its Epistles; and is not this written on every page, The world is one great battlefield, and he who will make it a mere spectacle, a place of idle lounging or of listless sauntering, is in reality *fighting against his God*¹ and forfeiting his immortal crown?

Life is a serious thing; if only for this one reason, that in it a spiritual war is perpetually waging, in which Christ and Satan are the combatants, and human souls the possession to be lost or won. Be on Christ's side,

¹ Acts v. 39.

and the victory is certain. *In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*¹. In the world ye shall have temptation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome, I have cast out, the tempter. But remember also, *He that is not with me is against me*; and to be against Christ is to be a lost man. Happy they who, amidst whatever discouragements from without or from within, are yet bearing about them the one badge of assured victory, *We sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end*²!

¹ John xvi. 33.

² Service for Infant Baptism.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY,
November 17, 1861.

LECTURE XXII.

REVELATION XII. 11.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*¹. We noticed last Sunday the stages by which that saying of our Lord, uttered on the occasion of the return of the seventy, was carried to its accomplishment. The words which He spoke, and the works which He wrought, on earth, were all so many blows struck at the integrity of Satan's empire over the world which he calls his own. The sufferings of Christ, His entire self-surrender, His obedience even unto death², and that death *the death of the cross*, were in a yet higher sense the ejection of Satan from his usurped dominion over man. Then were the words yet more decisively fulfilled, *The prince of this world is judged*³. *It, the promised seed, shall bruise thy*

¹ Luke x. 18.

² Phil. ii. 8.

³ John xvi. 11.

*head, even in the very moment in which thou shalt bruise his heel*¹. But in a higher degree and with a fuller meaning still was Satan cast out from his heaven by the glorious Resurrection and the glorious Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It was when *the Child was caught up to God and to His throne* that that decisive war arose in heaven, of which the result was that *the great dragon, the ancient serpent, he that is called slanderer and the adversary, he who leads astray the whole world, was thrown from heaven upon the earth, and his angels with him.*

I would have you notice, my brethren, before we pass on, the description, the fourfold description, here given us of that spiritual enemy with whom our struggle and our warfare lies. He is (1) *the great dragon; the prince of this world*²; the leader and commander (as we saw in a former Lecture) of the aggressions of the world upon the Church of Christ, upon the people of God. He is (2) *the ancient serpent*; the very person who in the earliest days of our race, having himself fallen yet earlier from his original uprightness, appeared as the tempter of man, and through his bodily appetite seduced him from his Maker. He is (3) *the slanderer and the adversary, the devil and Satan*; he who, as we read in the opening of the Book of Job, and again, more briefly, in the 3rd chapter of the prophecies of Zechariah, calumniates and slanders before God those whom he has first deceived and overthrown below. How unlike the heroic attributes

¹ Gen. iii. 15.² John xii. 31.

with which poetry has invested the great enemy of man !
how unlike the

*Princely counsel in his face yet shone
Majestic tho' in ruin ;*

or,

*With monarchal pride
Conscious of highest worth ;*

of which we read in our Milton ! The enemy of God is as mean as he is cruel. He is the slanderer, or calumniator, as well as the adversary. He first seduces man, and then tells of him ! And thus (4) he is described as the misleader of all the world ; *he who leads astray all the world*. We all know how vile a character must that be which can take pleasure in misdirecting a benighted traveller as to the route which he must take to gain the end of his journey. We have all read in Scripture the words which have been made to form a part of our Communion Service, *Cursed is he that maketh the blind to go out of his way*¹. Now that completes the description here given of him whom our Lord in the accomplishment of His work of Redemption cast down out of his heaven.

My brethren, I count it a great matter that we should divest ourselves of any notion of sin as being a great or a noble thing. The devil, who is the wielder of the concentrated power of sin, is the impersonation of all that is mean and cowardly and dastardly. He uses his intellect to deceive others, and when he has succeeded

¹ Deut. xxvii. 18.

in setting man against God, he then, as this passage forcibly describes it, endeavours as it were to set God against man. It is a great step gained when the devil is unmasked to us; when we learn to abhor him for his contemptible and odious character, at least as much as we dread him for his usurped and abused power.

Now the 10th and two following verses, read to you last Sunday, contain a song of triumph in heaven over the downfall of the devil and his angels. You are reminded that, though fallen from heaven through the finished work of Christ, the devil has yet an existence and a dominion too left him for a time on earth. In the passage now before us these two thoughts are combined. I shall not stay to enquire very curiously whose voice is heard in heaven thus celebrating Satan's fall and warning the earth of his remaining power and aggravated fury. Whether it was the voice of the righteous dead, or whether it was the voice of the holy Angels, makes little difference to the interpretation. Perhaps the pronoun used in the text, *they*, not *we*, may rather indicate that the speakers are not themselves of human but of angelic nature. The song itself is one partly of celebration and partly of anticipation. *The kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ* was established by the work of redemption. But that kingdom, that authority, is not yet in the full sense come. We still pray, *Thy kingdom come*¹. All is ready: the throne is erected; multitudes

¹ Matt. vi. 10.

of subjects flock around it and do homage, homage of heart and life, to Him who sits thereon : but not yet is *every enemy made his footstool*¹; sin still struggles, still in individual cases prevails, still in many parts of the earth reigns paramount ; and death, which follows after sin, is not yet *destroyed* by the crowning miracle of the general resurrection². But *the accuser of our brethren* is already cast down : he could not co-exist in heaven with the Mediator and the Intercessor. The entrance of the Advocate is the expulsion of the slanderer. The work of redemption accomplished is the silencing of the accuser above, as well as the silencing of the accuser within.

And they overcame him. We are reading here, you will remember, of the time of the Ascension. And at that time no Christians (strictly so called) had yet died. The victory spoken of is one which in its full sense could not be won until after Christ's Ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. St Stephen was the first example of it. Doubtless the Old Testament saints had conquered through the same power. Not only was Christ *foreordained before the foundation of the world*³, but we believe that the Redemption threw its healing virtue behind as well as before ; upon those who could only, like Abraham, *see the day of Christ*⁴ in vision, as well as upon those who walked in the brightest light of its noonday. Still the words of the text have their fullest accomplishment in the

¹ Heb. i. 13.

² 1 Cor. xv. 26.

³ 1 Pet. i. 20.

⁴ John viii. 56.

period after Christ's coming. And we shall best regard them as anticipative and prophetic in their tone; as describing the victory which has been won by Christ's servants, one after another, and age after age, under the dispensation of the Gospel; and of which the completion of Christ's work by ascension contained not the promise only but the power.

Now therefore let us fix our thoughts upon the revelation here made to us of the manner of the Christian victory. And while we dwell upon its three chief instruments, as they are here disclosed to us, let us do so—God grant us grace to do so—in a spirit of serious self-application, remembering that if we conquer we must conquer thus and not otherwise, and that if we conquer not we can never win our crown.

I. First then, it is here written, *they conquered him through the blood of the Lamb*. Every Christian, whether he live, like St John, in the first century, or, like us, in the nineteenth, conquers the devil *owing to*—for that is the exact force of the word—*the blood of the Lamb*. Every true Christian is a fighting man. He has an enemy, and he knows it. They, we believe, will manage their warfare best and most skilfully, who most clearly realize to themselves the fact of a personal though spiritual adversary. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world*¹. *Lest Satan, the same Apostle writes, should get an advantage of us:*

¹ Eph. vi. 12.

for we are not ignorant of his devices¹. St Paul had a strong sense of the existence and the personality of the devil. It was so with other Apostles. St James: *Resist the devil: and he will flee from you*². St Peter: *Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, stedfast in the faith*³. And One greater than any Apostle said, in language made memorable alike by its occasion and by its consequences, *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*⁴. Those who have done Christ's work on earth most stoutly and most bravely have all been men who felt themselves to be fighting a battle day by day, not with vague and impalpable ideas, not with general notions or abstract principles of evil, but with a living spiritual enemy, whose access to them, whose presence with them, they could almost trace like that of a man. *They conquered him*, it is written of these, as one by one they have *finished their course and accomplished their warfare*⁵, *him* the deceiver and the slanderer, *him* the tempter and the accuser, *owing to the blood of the Lamb*. This was the secret of their strength.

None of you, my brethren, will be afraid of the expression which God Himself has here given us. It is one of the signs of good amongst us as a nation, that we jealously watch and guard the possession of the doctrine of Propitiation. A man who gainsays the

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 11.² James iv. 7.³ 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.⁴ Luke xxii. 31, 32.⁵ 2 Tim. iv. 7. Isai. xl. 2.

Atonement must find himself an audience amongst a few learned men; he is not one who has with him that almost infallible mark of the true Gospel, that *the common people hear him gladly*¹. We may thank God for this: it is one of the many proofs that the Gospel, the pure, the simple, the often despised Gospel, came from the God of nature, from the God of the human heart, from Him who *knew what was in man*² because He had Himself made man. But I have a few plain things to say to those who prize, as we, I am sure, all prize, the words, and the thing signified by the words, atonement, propitiation, sacrifice, *the blood of the cross, the blood of the Lamb*³. *The blood of the Lamb* evidently means the blood shed by Him who is called in Scripture *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*⁴. It means, as our Communion Service expresses it, *the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world, which Christ our Saviour made there, upon the cross, by His one oblation of Himself once offered.*

Now do I not speak this evening to many hearts which will echo the word in their secret depths? *They overcame the devil because of (owing to) the blood of the Lamb?* Can you overcome evil, can you get rid of one sin; of the clogging guilt, of the condemning voice, of the enthralling and enfeebling power, of any one sinful temper, evil desire, or hurtful lust; without, apart from, the blood of the Lamb? What is it, so many of

¹ Mark xii. 37.

² John ii. 25.

³ Col. i. 20.

⁴ John i. 29.

you as ever know what peace of mind is, which gives you that peace? What is it, so many of you as know what it is to struggle manfully with a temptation, which gives you the heart so to struggle? What is it, so many of you as know what it is to rise again to your feet after a fall, which gives you encouragement so to arise and renew your conflict? I might run through all the possible stages and phases of a Christian life, and ask with respect to each, Do you not owe it primarily to the blood of the Lamb? to the assurance that our Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross bear and take away the sins of the world, and therefore also your sins? that *He is the propitiation*, as St John writes, *for our sins, and not for ours only*—lest we should say, Perhaps I may not be one of those true Christians of whom he speaks—*but also for the sins of the whole world*¹? Thus we claim for ourselves, and would preserve, God helping us, for every later and latest generation of the Church, the comforting and strengthening power of the simple heaven-sent doctrine of the Atonement made for our sins and for all sins by the blood, that is, by the death, of our Saviour and our Redeemer.

But, while we do so, we must no less earnestly press upon you and upon ourselves the serious enquiry, Are we indeed making this use of the blood of the Lamb? Are we indeed overcoming our sins, one by one, and every one, through this faith in our forgiveness? Let

¹ 1 John ii. 2.

us take heed lest we be fighting for the Atonement, instead of conquering through it; lest we be champions of the doctrine only, and not champions of our Saviour through the doctrine. Let us all, if God gives us grace, love the very sound of the words, atonement, propitiation, sacrifice, yet not because they are the watchwords (as they ought to be) of the whole Church; but because we have tried for ourselves the thing to which they testify, and have found it in our own experience salutary and lifegiving to the soul.

2. It is here written, in the second place, that Christians overcome the devil *through (owing to) the word of their testimony*: that is, the word or message which they attest; of which they are witnesses.

The word, or message. That is the simple and expressive account of God's Revelation. It is a word, an utterance, something said by God to us. It is not exactly a book; though a book contains and embodies it. It was originally something spoken; spoken by the Son of God on earth, or else spoken by the Son of God from heaven. *God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son*¹. Let us think thus of Revelation. God has spoken to us. God, who had already given us a voice without and a voice within; the voice of nature, arguing from *the things that are made* the *eternal power and Godhead*² of Him who made them; and the voice of reason and conscience, telling us, and enforcing upon us in detail, the great leading principles of truth and

¹ Heb. i 2.

² Rom. i. 20.

falsehood, of right and wrong; the same God has thought it worth while to add to these two voices yet a third and a fourth; another voice without, and another voice within; the voice of His Revelation, and the voice of His Spirit. How ought we to press forward to catch these new sounds; these new communications added to the former! They must be true, they must be important, they must be serviceable, they must be urgent; or God would not have gone on to add them to the disclosures of Himself already given, or to seal their utterance with the very blood of the Lamb.

To this word, this new or added word of God, it is here said that we, if we be Christians indeed, are all witnesses. *They overcame him in virtue of the word of their testimony.* My brethren, in what sense can any of us be called witnesses to God's Word, to God's Revelation? How is our evidence given? how is our testimony borne? Is it borne by a brave avowal of our convictions? Is it borne by never being ashamed of Christ? Is it borne by obedience? Is it borne by bringing every part of our life—thought, motive, aim, word, spirit, act—into conformity with that word which we call our creed and our Gospel? These are serious questions: God give us grace to ponder them, and to answer them as we must one day answer them to Himself!

3. There is yet a third instrument of victory. *And they loved not their life unto death.* They carried their life's devotion even to the length of death. They overcame the devil by a self-sacrifice which stopped not short of death. Of whom, my brethren, is this written? Who

has any conception now of such self-devotion? God does not call us, at this time—He may call us to it, such *judgment* may *begin* again *at the house of God*¹—but at present God does not call us to the endurance of persecution commonly so called, of martyrdom commonly so called, in attestation of our faith in Christ. We are not called, now, to show our self-devotion by dying for Christ: but we are all called, at all times, to show our self-devotion by living for Christ. Let us read the words as though they were for us, *They loved not themselves unto the life*: they loved not their own pleasure, their own inclination, their own ease, their own will, even to the length of life: they were ready even to devote a life, a whole life, with all its pleasures and interests, with all its enjoyments and all its occupations, to the glory of God and to the service of their Saviour. Yes, my brethren, this it is, chiefly, to which we are now called: and it is of more consequence that we fix our thoughts calmly and steadily upon that which God commonly demands of us, than that we should be gazing backward into the far past, or onward into the possible future, at that which He did once, or which He may yet again, require of His people. He may bid us die for Him: He does bid us live for Him. If we do not the one, the less, we may be quite sure that we shall never rise to the other, the higher and the more glorious. Which of all us is giving his life, *the life that now is*², and while it still is, to his Saviour? Which of us is subordinating all his wishes to that Saviour's will, regulating all his words

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 17.² 1 Tim. iv. 8.

by that Saviour's rule, and all his acts by that Saviour's example? He, and he only, is overcoming the devil by not loving himself unto the life. He, and he only, should the fires of persecution and of martyrdom be again kindled, will be made willing and made able to overcome the devil by not loving life itself unto the death.

Let us reflect thoughtfully upon the three topics now presented. The blood of the Lamb, the word of the testimony, and the devotion of life even unto death. The atonement which is our hope, the word which is our testimony, the self-surrender which is our obedience. May He, in whose hand are the hearts of all men, give meaning within to the sounds heard outwardly! May He quicken in us a wholesome dread of doctrine disjoined from practice; of revelations accepted, not used; of a seed *falling upon stony places* or *among the thorns*, and *bringing no fruit to perfection*¹! Surely of all the terrors of the last great day none will be so appalling to witness, none so agonizing to endure, as that of him who shall say, *I ate and I drank in Christ's presence, but He never knew me*²: *I called Him my Saviour, but He never saved me from my sins*³: *I trusted in the blood of sprinkling*⁴, *but I treated it all the time as an unholy thing, and did despite day by day to the Spirit of grace*⁵!

As yet the day of grace holds out, and the door of acceptance is not closed. *Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near: let the*

¹ Matt. xiii. 5, 7. Luke viii. 14. ² Luke xiii. 26, 27. ³ Matt. i. 21.

⁴ Heb. x. 29.

⁵ Heb. xii. 24.

wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon¹.

¹ Isai. lv. 6, 7.

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT,
November 24, 1861.

LECTURE XXIII.

REVELATION XII. 17.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

WE spoke last of the three weapons by which the Christian victory is won, as they are described for us in the song of triumph in heaven over the downfall of the great enemy of man. *They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their life unto death.* The atonement made for all sin in the death of Christ; the word or message of God, to which all true Christians bear in act and in endurance a firm and intelligible testimony; and that spirit of entire self-devotion and self-surrender which perseveres even unto death, and stops not short (if God so require) of the sacrifice of life itself for Christ.

The fall of Satan having been seen in the Prophet's vision as a fall from heaven to earth consequent upon

the Ascension of the risen Jesus from earth to heaven, it suits the form of the vision to congratulate the heavens upon his departure, and to warn the regions below of his arrival. *Therefore¹ rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that tabernacle therein. Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath a short season.*

You will notice here that we are not to localize too much the event described. The real thing spoken of is the breaking of Satan's power by the Redemption. The devil is like one who has been violently thrown from a great height, and falls upon the earth bruised and humbled. *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven².* It is a figure of speech; but, like all the figures of Holy Scripture, a figure full of meaning. Satan is no longer master: if any one still serves him, it is his own fault; he need not do so: Christ has vanquished the devil; has thrown him down from his eminence: in the same degree the fury of the devil is aggravated; his desire to injure increases as his power to injure is circumscribed: if he has fallen from heaven to earth, he is come there with great wrath because he knows that he has but a short time.

And if we are asked who they are who are here bidden to rejoice, and to whom, on the other hand, the warning voice is addressed; we must answer, in accordance with the general tenor of Scripture teaching, that by the one is meant those servants of God whose *warfare*

¹ Verse 12.

² Luke x. 18.

*is accomplished*¹, and by the other those who are still in the world's battle-field, amidst temptation and danger, their rest still future, their victory not yet won. To these, and yet more, if it be possible, to that ungodly and idolatrous world which surrounds or mingles with them, the sound of alarm may well be uttered from heaven, that the enemy whom Christ has dethroned still exists, still works; and that with a rage heightened by the consciousness that sentence is already passed upon him, and the time of its execution fixed and near.

And now we return to that which was the subject of an earlier part of this chapter, the condition of her who had born upon earth the Divine Child; in other words, of that Church of God, of which, *as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever*². The 6th verse told us, as if by anticipation, that *the woman*, when her Son was caught up unto God and to His throne, *fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared for her by God, that they might nourish her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days*. The intervening passage has explained to us the occasion of this flight. The enemy at first seen was directing his hostility not against the woman but against her child. Now we have heard of the war between that child and the dragon, and of its termination in the defeat and expulsion of the dragon; sending him back to earth with the mark of destruction upon him, and with a determination to use to the uttermost for purposes of evil his brief time of

¹ Isai. xl: 2.

² Rom. ix. 5.

respite. Thus we are prepared for the introduction of the five verses on which we are now to dwell.

*And*¹ *when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman who bare the man child. And*² *there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle.* The allusion is to that passage in the book of Exodus in which Moses is instructed to say to the Israelites in the name of God, *Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself*³. And the same figure is more fully drawn out in the inspired song of Moses. *He found him, Israel, in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him*⁴. And so, once again, in the well-known words of the prophet Isaiah: *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*⁵. Thus the figure was consecrated in the Old Testament to the one use of expressing God's special care and providence for His people and His chosen. *There were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle*, that eagle of which the Church had so often read in her Old Testament Scriptures, *that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is*

¹ Verse 13.

² Verse 14.

³ Exod. xix. 4.

⁴ Deut. xxxii. 10, 11, 12.

⁵ Isai. xl. 31.

nourished for a season and seasons and half a season from the face of the serpent. The expression here used to denote the length of the Church's sojourn in the wilderness is first found in the prophecy of the 7th chapter of Daniel, with reference to the war of the persecuting power against the saints of the Most High: *And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time*¹. And again in the 12th chapter of the same Book, where, in answer to the question of the preceding verse, *How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?* it is declared that *it shall be for a time, times, and an half*². It is the same period, of the half seven, of three years and a half, of forty-two months, or of twelve hundred and sixty days, which we have often had occasion to explain in former discourses on this Book as the symbol of the duration of the predicted sufferings and trials of the Church of God; a period short in comparison with the whole of time, short in comparison with *the glory which shall be revealed*³ and with the eternity which shall follow, though it be not short in itself, nor in the feeling and apprehension of those who are still fighting their way through it. We have already had it expressed in the 6th verse of this chapter, with reference to this very subject, under the equivalent form of *a thousand two hundred and threescore days*.

*And*⁴ *the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might make her to be carried away by the river.* The figure is precisely that of the

¹ Dan. vii. 25.

² Dan. xii. 6, 7.

³ Rom. viii. 18.

⁴ Verse 15.

124th Psalm. *If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth*¹. The flood cast out of the dragon's mouth is a flood of raging multitudes rising against the Lord and against His Christ², and seeking to overwhelm the Church's faith and the Church's life. The dragon as *the prince of this world*³ marshals the world's hosts against the growing power of the truth. What a significance must this image have had for those who lived in the first age of the Church, when the fire of persecution was raging under Nero, Domitian, or Decius, to consume all who would not revile their Saviour and pay an impious adoration to the image of the Roman Emperor! But hear what next follows. *When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him*⁴.

*And*⁵ *the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and drank up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.* The worldly power of persecution is swallowed up by another power, itself also of the earth. Just as in past ages the kingdom of Babylon, the great persecutor of the Church of Israel, was overthrown by the kingdom of Persia, which took under its protection the exiled remnant, and restored it to its land and to its

¹ Psalm cxxiv. 2—6.² Acts iv. 26.³ John xii. 31.⁴ Isai. lix. 19.⁵ Verse 16.

temple; even thus should it be with the Empire of Pagan Rome: it also should be humbled and partitioned by a new power, barbarian and godless in its beginning, but destined in due time to embrace, in name at least, the faith once abhorred, and to introduce that new order of things which should make a nominal Christianity the religion of states and nations, and secure it for ever against the risk of a repetition of bygone persecutions. How singular a prediction! how far beyond the reach of human foresight! yet also how exactly, how marvellously fulfilled! The prophecy is not that which, however improbable it might have appeared, was at least obvious to an inventor; namely, that the faith of Christ, then so much despised, should one day be adopted by the Roman Empire: but rather, that persecuting Rome itself should be absorbed and engulfed in another kingdom or group of kingdoms, which should help the Church without ceasing to be worldly, and put down the Church's enemies without really incorporating itself in the Church. What eye save that of God Himself could have foreseen this particular phenomenon, or recorded it, centuries before its accomplishment, in the Scriptures of His truth?

And¹ the dragon was angered at the woman, and departed to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus. The dragon is foiled in his direct attack upon the woman, that is, upon the Church of Christ collectively;

¹ Verse 17.

and quits her for the purpose of making war with the rest of her seed, that is, with those individual Christians who have survived former persecutions, and who are characterized in the last words of the chapter as those *who keep the commandments of God and who have, hold or maintain, the testimony of Jesus*. The malice and the violence of the prince of this world has been unable to prevent the Church from rooting itself firmly in the earth: it must be recognized, even by him, as beyond his reach as an institution: he must acquiesce in its existence as a fact, and turn his defeated rage some other way. Henceforth he leaves the woman, and goes to make war with the surviving individuals of her seed.

And is not this also true, remarkably true, to history and to fact? No one now seriously dreams of extirpating Christianity from the earth. The dragon has long ceased from that labour. But not on that account is the great war ended. The Church is, no doubt, a standing monument of the truth of the Gospel. The Church, by which we understand the whole body of professed Christians united into one body by the use of certain ordinances and by the acknowledgment of a common Revelation; the Church, so understood, is indeed, as St Paul called it, the very *pillar and ground of the truth*¹, that which supports and bears up the fabric, that without which the existence of the true religion on earth would be (humanly speaking) impossible. But that which can no longer be done by open siege may

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

yet perhaps be effected by a process of insidious undermining: the war which must end as against the woman may be carried on as against her seed; and if it be successful against the latter, it will, indirectly at least, not weaken only but destroy the former. It will be little to have the Church of Christ existing, if the members of that Church are vanquished. If *the remnant of the seed* can be subdued and captured, the dragon himself may acquiesce in the escape and in the security of the woman.

Now therefore, my brethren, our concluding word of exhortation will divide itself for us into two practical considerations.

1. First, you will observe the description here given of the true seed. It is twofold. They *keep the commandments of God*, and they *hold the testimony of Jesus*. Either of these without the other must be, for us at least—we enter not into the question as it may affect past ages, or nations still sitting in darkness—an incomplete, nay, a fallacious test of true membership, of true worship. It is the old combination; faith and works; a *heart sprinkled from an evil conscience*¹ and a life suitable to one who loves God. You will think that I might find some newer topic: could I find a topic more discriminating, or more important? Neither of these two things, I would repeat it, will suffice for us without the other. Do not say, If I keep God's commandments, that is enough; I know nothing about the testimony of Jesus, but I am persuaded

¹ Heb. x. 22.

God will not condemn a man who has lived a good life. Every word in such a sentence is capable of just refutation: but I would rather repeat the remark, You are told here that two things are necessary; and it is frightful presumption to put asunder that which God has thus joined. *Keep the commandments of God:* deal with yourself honestly on this point; be not deceived; enter into judgment with yourself: it is far better that you should do this than that God should do it; and it is only *if we judge ourselves* that the promise is to us that *we shall not be judged*¹. I believe that of all Gospel Sermons the most Evangelical is the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments; the rehearsal of each and of all, in their solemn severity, in their spiritual import, in their personal application; and the enquiry which must ever follow them, *How shall I, a sinner, become just with God?*² how shall I *make my heart clean?* how shall I *be pure from my own sin?*³ To a man so questioning, *the testimony of Jesus* will sound sweet and attractive; telling of One *who His own self bare our sins*⁴, of One who offers to endue us with a *new Spirit*⁵. To that man it will be no comfort to hear that he may sin on and not die for it; that he may fall asleep in his sins and yet awake to find himself pardoned. To him rather will it be a comfort to hear that already, now at once, not tomorrow but today, he may loose the burden from his back at the sight of Christ's cross, and go forth a forgiven man to be holy and to be strong in God. That is salvation. That is redemption. Not the

¹ Cor. xi. 31.² Job ix. 2.³ Prov. xx. 9.⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 24.⁵ Ezek. xi. 19.

liberty to keep the testimony of Jesus without keeping the commandments of God. Not the liberty to use words of love and faith towards Jesus, and go forth in works to deny Him. But the grace, day by day, according to our need, to look upward and be sure of an answer; the infusion into the palsied withered arm of the power to be straight and flexible; the replacing of the leprous defilement, even while we wash in the *fountain once opened for sin and for uncleanness*¹, as with the very *flesh of the little child*², so that, behold, we are again clean! That is what we call salvation. That is what includes in one whole the two blessed characteristics, they *keep the commandments of God*, and they *maintain the testimony of Jesus*.

2. Secondly, you will observe that it is against such persons that the dragon, who has given up attacking the Church collectively, has now gone forth to make war. Our great enemy, we have seen, does not now so much dread as once he did the existence of Christianity upon earth, or the establishment of the Church upon earth; he thinks he can deal with it in detail: if he can make havoc of the members, he cares less about the body; the body will soon be a mere inert lifeless trunk if he can only lop off one by one its limbs. So that, I repeat it, he is now dealing with Christians individually and in detail. Alas! my brethren, does he so deal quite unsuccessfully? Tell me, you who know something of the Christian life; tell me, you who know what it is to be softened in heart by the

¹ Zech. xiii. 1.

² 2 Kings v. 14.

thought of Jesus, and who also have taken pains not to disjoin faith from works, but rather to endeavour to keep the commandments of God as well as, and by the help of, the testimony of Jesus: have you not found this life a struggle? is it any exaggeration to say that you have found it a warfare, a daily battle? And are you not sometimes—yes, confess it, are you not every day more or less—worsted in that ever old, ever new conflict? Are you not sometimes saying in your heart, I must give it up? I am making no way? I am as far from *my rest and my inheritance*¹ now as I was five years or ten years or twenty years ago? My brethren, the dragon is making war with you just because you are one of those who do in some sense keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. Let that be some comfort to you. He would not go to war with you, if you were altogether on his side. Draw encouragement even from your defeats. Rise, renew *the good fight*²; look upwards yet again; see *the Captain of your salvation*³ passing through all before you, sin alone excepted; hear Him heaving on earth the deep sigh; hear Him saying, *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me*⁴? behold Him alone in the wilderness for forty days and nights with the tempter; behold Him at last conquering not amidst only but by means of defeat, *bruising the serpent's head* in the very moment of the serpent's *bruising His heel*⁵; hear Him saying to you, *Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*⁶:

¹ Deut. xii. 9.² 1 Tim. vi. 12.³ Heb. ii. 10.⁴ Matt. xxvii. 46.⁵ Gen. iii. 15.⁶ John xvi. 33.

recall these things, ponder them, digest them inwardly, and then, whosoever you be, *lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you, and run with patience yet a little longer the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus¹!*

¹ Heb. xii. 1, 2.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT,
December 8, 1861.

LECTURE XXIV.

REVELATION XIII. 10.

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

THE season of Advent is one of special preparation for the coming of Christ's kingdom. It seems no unsuitable employment to continue our examination of that section of this holy Book which tells us of the enemies of Christ's kingdom; tells us, in other words, what are the powers and influences which oppose its coming; and directs us to the proper means of counteracting them, both individually and collectively; both in our own hearts, and as members of that *Church which is Christ's body*¹.

The enemies here portrayed are three. We have dwelt in the last four Lectures upon the first and chief of these; the great spiritual adversary, the devil or Satan. The chapter now before us describes the other two. I approach the subject not without anxiety. The inter-

¹ Eph. i. 23.

pretation is not easy; in some respects, it may be, less than certain. Still more do I fear lest to any of us it should be more curious than profitable: lest any of us should miss its deep spiritual lessons: lest he who speaks to you should ever forget that his business in this place is with souls, not with minds; or if with minds, yet only so far as the mind acts upon the soul, informing it, enlightening it, directing it, so that it may conduct its warfare more wisely, with a clearer insight into its enemies' plans, and a more accurate chart of the country through which it must fight its way to glory. In this sense, and in this sense only, may he who ministers say legitimately, *I will speak to the spirit, and I will speak to the understanding also: I will preach with the spirit, and I will preach with the understanding also*¹. God grant us all grace thus to speak and thus to hear!

And² I was set upon the sand of the sea. St John is still in the spirit, and still in heaven: but at this point the scenery of his vision embraces the great restless ocean, as he had seen it many times from his island prison; and he is standing upon the sand on which it dashes. It was thus with the Prophet Daniel in the case of that vision of his 7th chapter to which we shall have occasion so often to refer in the interpretation of that now before us. *Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea*³. The sea is the emblem of human multitudes; of the nations of the world in their

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

² Verse 1.

³ Dan. vii. 2.

vast expansion and in their busy unresting agitation. We shall notice, as we advance, how suitable to the opening subject is this position of the seer.

And I saw a wild beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. The horns are first mentioned, as first visible in its rising. The ten horns are collected upon the seventh head. And they are crowned; in token of dominion and sovereignty. Upon the heads are inscribed names of blasphemy. Blasphemy has two senses: sometimes it is reviling God, speaking irreverently or rebelliously against His revelation or His Providence; sometimes it is the assumption by a creature of the attributes of the Creator, the arrogating to oneself of an honour or a power which belongs to God only. The Jews said, *Thou blasphemest*, when our Saviour declared Himself to be the Son of God¹. In both these senses, but especially in the latter, the word is here used.

And² the wild beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion. Thus it combined in itself the characteristics of the several animals seen in the corresponding vision of the Prophet Daniel. *The first was like a lion...And behold, another beast, a second, like to a bear...After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard³.*

And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. The dragon, *the prince of this world⁴,*

¹ John x. 36. ² Verse 2. ³ Dan. vii. 4—6. ⁴ John xii. 31.

does not assume a bodily form; but he prepares for himself an agent and a representative. The second enemy is thus the viceroy of the first.

And¹ I saw one of his heads as if having been slain unto death: and the stroke of his death was healed. The wound was not deadly only, but fatal: it was unto death. And that death was the death of the animal itself: *the wound of his death*: the mortal wound inflicted upon one of the seven heads, is the death of the wild beast itself. But the fatal stroke is recovered from. *And the whole earth wondered after the wild beast*; wondered, as it followed him, at his supernatural vitality.

And² they worshipped the dragon, because he gave the authority which has been described—*such authority—to the wild beast; and they worshipped the wild beast, saying, Who is like unto the wild beast? and who is able to war with him?* *And³ there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemy, and there was given him authority to act during forty-two months*; the same period so often designated as that of the affliction of the Church under her oppressor.

And⁴ he opened his mouth unto blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle and them that tabernacle (dwell) in the heaven. *And⁵ it was given to him to make war with the saints, and to conquer them; and there was given him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.* *And⁶ all they that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, every one whose name*

¹ Verse 3. ² Verse 4. ³ Verse 5. ⁴ Verse 6.

⁵ Verse 7. ⁶ Verse 8.

has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain, from the foundation of the world. In a later chapter we read, *whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*¹. Heretherefore also I would understand the words *from the foundation of the world* as belonging to *written*, and not to *slain*. *Every one whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.*

*If*² *any one has an ear, let him hear. If*³ *any one is destined to go into captivity, into captivity he goes: if any in (by) sword is destined to perish, he must in (by) sword be killed.* The words are quoted from the prophet Jeremiah. *And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the Lord; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity*⁴. God's judgments are to fall heavily upon His people: they cannot resist them.

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. In these coming, these predicted, these inevitable sufferings under the power of the second enemy of the Church, a large demand will be made upon the submission and upon the faith of God's saints.

*And*⁵ *I saw another wild beast rising out of the earth.* The picture of the second enemy would be incomplete

¹ Rev. xvii. 8.

² Verse 9.

³ Verse 10.

⁴ Jer. xv. 2.

⁵ Verse 11.

without that of the third. The first point of difference is the quarter from which each rises in the vision. The second was from the sea: the third is from the earth. *And he had two horns like those of a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon.* There is a union of the two characteristics, of mildness and of subtlety. *And¹ he does (exercises) all the authority of the first wild beast in his presence.* As the second enemy is the representative of the first, so the third is the abetter of the second. *And he made the earth, and them that dwell in it, that they shall worship the first wild beast, the stroke of whose death, whose fatal wound, was healed.* *And² he does great signs; that he may (so as to) make even fire to descend out of the heaven upon the earth in the sight of mankind.* *And³ he leads astray those who dwell on the earth, because of the signs which were given him to do in the presence of the wild beast; saying to those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the wild beast that has the stroke of the sword and lived.* *And⁴ it was given to him to give breath to the image of the wild beast, that the image of the wild beast might both speak and make (cause) that as many as worship not the image of the wild beast be slain.* *And⁵ he makes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bondmen, that they should give them (that there should be given to them) a mark upon their right hand or on to their forehead, and⁶ that no one is able to buy or to sell but he who has the mark, that is, the name of the wild beast, or the number*

¹ Verse 12.² Verse 13.³ Verse 14.⁴ Verse 15.⁵ Verse 16.⁶ Verse 17.

of his name. Here¹ is wisdom. Let him that hath an understanding count the number of the wild beast: for it is a man's number; that is, a human number, a number known in common reckoning; and his number is six hundred and sixty and six.

I have desired on many accounts to combine in one view the whole revelation thus presented. And now let us gather up the chief points, and afterwards apply the subject to ourselves.

The second enemy of Christ's Church is the world. The devil is the first. The world is the second. The wild beast rises out of the sea which is the symbol of the multitudes of nations, and he bears upon him the evident tokens of that vision of the 7th chapter of the book of Daniel, the interpretation of which is expressly given at its close, in the verses beginning, *These great beasts, which are four, are four kings²*. The devil, who is the prince of this world, employs the power of this world as his own instrument of persecution. The seven heads of the wild beast denote the multiplication and the succession of worldly powers arrayed against the Church. The deadly wound indicates some blow struck, with apparently fatal consequences, at the power of the ungodly and Antichristian world. Such a blow was the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to the faith of Christ, and the establishment of a nominal Christianity as the religion of the great Roman Empire. It might have seemed as though the trials of the Church,

¹ Verse 18.

² Dan. vii. 17.

collectively at least, were then for ever ended. But the deadly wound was healed. Not yet had *the kingdoms of the world* really become *the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ*¹; the nominally Christian empire could persecute as well as the openly idolatrous: *he that was born after the flesh* was still the natural enemy of *him that was born after the spirit*²; and Papal Rome in later ages too often resumed the sword which Pagan Rome had dropped.

This vitality of the Antichristian power is described as awakening the admiration of the world itself. It has been in all times the wonder, as well as the boast, of the world, to reflect upon its own greatness. Whether it be as the persecutor, or whether it be as the seducer, the world is great; it is idle, it is delusive, to gainsay it: and deep down in the world's own conscience there is that which marvels at the empire which it wields. How must *the children of this world* say sometimes in the secret of their souls, O wonder of wonders, that God should permit us thus to triumph over *the children of light*³! And then the devil reassures them with one of his lying vanities, and argues from present success eventual triumph. *They worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*

My brethren, it is of great importance that we should rightly use the word of God's prophecy, and not least when it speaks to us of the world's warfare against His Church. Too ready have men been, in all times, to

¹ Rev. xi. 15.

² Gal. iv. 29.

³ Luke xvi. 8.

transfer the application of the truth to others from themselves. How eager have even Christian men been to give a name, and consequently a limit, to the enemy here described! One has called him Paganism, and thus thrown him altogether back into the unreality of an obsolete age. Another has called him Romanism, and has thus rendered it impossible that the word of warning should reach him and his friends in the fastness of a Protestant security. O for a warning voice to say to us, *Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together*¹: wherever *the spirit of the world*² is, there is the scope of God's judgments: let it call itself what it may, Pagan or Christian, Popish or Protestant, the world is still God's enemy; still *hates the light*³; still *is not subject to the law of God*⁴; still *is offended in Christ*⁵, first for His humility, and then for His holiness; still looks coldly upon, still casts out, still, if it dares—and it does dare—will persecute, those who by act and word *testify of it that its works are evil*⁶! Let us look well within, and see whether this second enemy of Christ has no lodgment and no camp there; whether our world, be it what it may—orthodox perhaps in doctrine, correct in opinion, decent in conduct, orderly in worship—has not its own recognized departures from Christian practice and from Christian charity; whether it does not lord it over us with a rule paramount to Christ's, and exclude from the pale of its communion those who *worship the Lord God and*

¹ Matt. xxiv. 28.² 1 Cor. ii. 12.³ John iii. 20.⁴ Rom. viii. 7.⁵ Matt. xiii. 57.⁶ John vii. 7.

*Him only*¹. Depend upon it, there is, even for us in these days, one and but one security; and it is that of the first age, of St John's lifetime, of saints and martyrs of the earliest days of the Gospel; the being *written from the beginning of the world in the Lamb's book of life*. *All they that dwell upon the earth shall worship the beast, whose names are not thus written*. We read not the names in that book; it is not yet opened; that remains for a later vision and for the disclosures of *the end of all things*²: yet can we certainly judge, for ourselves if not for others, whether our names are there, when we read in God's Word the catalogue of the graces of the Spirit³, and ask with an impartial earnestness whether any of those graces, even in germ, are ours.

We pass to the third enemy. The second is the world in its power: what is the third? how are his features drawn?

He rises out of the earth: whoever he is, there is the mark of earthliness upon his very origin. He has the outward characteristics of the lamb; but most unlike these is his utterance: he speaks as a dragon; with all the cunning and with all the fatal persuasiveness of the original tempter, the ancient and the subtle serpent. It is his business to play into the hands of the second enemy. He makes the earth and its inhabitants to worship the beast whose deadly wound was healed. In this enterprise he works wonders. Fire comes down from heaven at his bidding. Nay, when he has moulded an image of the beast whom he abets, he can even

¹ Matt. iv. 10.

² 1 Pet. iv. 7.

³ Gal. v. 22, 23.

breathe life into it and make it speak. So little decisive are mere marvels, as to their source and origin. The devil has his sorceries: the world is full of them. Never was an age more full of them than ours: how men gaze and listen and admire as new prodigies are opened before them, and say, or think if they say not, Perhaps the Christian miracles can thus be explained away, or put at any rate in the same rank with the marvels of modern magnetism or spirit-intercourse! Woe to him who in such days has disjoined, in his Christian evidences, signs of power from signs of goodness, the miracles of Christ from the character of Christ, indications of superhuman strength from words such as *never man spake*¹ and a spirit such as man never breathed!

The object of the *lying wonders*² wrought by the third enemy is to enforce the worship of the second. Every one who would be admitted to the commerce of human life must receive the mark of that beast which is the world's power, upon the right hand which is to do life's business, or upon the forehead which is to show itself in life's society.

I shall enter into no curious questions here as to the interpretation of the last words of the chapter. It has not yet been given to man to speak decisively upon the symbol there disclosed. *Here is wisdom: let him that hath an understanding count the number.* That wisdom, that understanding, seems as yet to have been withheld. We have already seen something of the symbolism of

¹ John vii. 46.

² 2 Thess. ii. 9.

numbers in this Book. We have noticed the perfect seven, and the imperfect half seven; the one the emblem of the duration of the glory that shall be, the other of the duration of the conflicts and tribulations of the present. We have noticed also that number twelve, which (with its multiples) is the Apocalyptic signal of the Church; the *twelve stars*¹, the *four and twenty elders*², the *hundred and forty four thousand which were redeemed from the earth*³. Can it be—the question has been asked, though we presume not to answer it—that the six hundred sixty and six, the thrice repeated six, the reiteration of the half twelve, is itself the symbol of the world, as the full and perfect twelve is of the Church; itself, without looking further, the intended badge of the lying pretender, even as the other is the index of the real, the permanent, and the true?

The third enemy—we may gather, I think, from the marks affixed to him—is the ungodly Antichristian wisdom, as the second is the ungodly Antichristian power, of the world. It is that false philosophy, that *science falsely so called*⁴, that speculative and sceptical opinion, that reason without humility and without God; which, with all its professions of elevation and of independence, has ever been the real ally of the world and the bitterest enemy of revelation and of the Church. This it was which propped up a system of idolatry in which it had itself no vestige of faith. This it was which united with

¹ Rev. xii. 1.

² Rev. iv. 4.

³ Rev. xiv. 3.

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

the coercive power of a heathen state in running down and making havoc of the new religion and the young Church of Christ. *This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*¹. The brute force of the second enemy were powerless without this intelligence of the third. Sometimes the two may work together in one ruler; the demoniacal acuteness, and the animal cruelty. Sometimes, more often perhaps, they are found disjoined; and the only link of union is a common godlessness. That is the combining and cementing sympathy. That is the one characteristic which the second enemy shares with the third. Both of them look earthward; neither can lift up his eyes to the God above. Therefore they are one in their work, one in their aim, and one in their end.

My brethren, I spoke of the danger of giving names to the Church's enemies, lest we lose sight of their existence in places where their working may be most insidious. I spoke of the world within us; the world which hates holiness, the world which even now persecutes Christ. May I not add one word of special warning as to the enemy last described? May I not speak of the possible prevalence in us of a worldly wisdom; of an understanding not regulated by conscience, not enlightened by the Word of God, not sanctified by a spirit of reverence, not elevated by habits of devotion? Is there not in this age, is there not even amongst ourselves, a wilfulness, a perverseness, a way

¹ James iii. 15.

wardness, concerning truth, concerning revelation, which leads many persons very far astray from the way of holiness and from the way of peace? You know that it is thus; you know that the work of the third enemy is ever going on, not only in lands still lying in darkness, not only amongst those who have openly denied and forsaken their Saviour, but even amongst men who still call Him Lord, and still attend upon the ordinances of His worship. Let us say it plainly, the enemy is more or less in all of us. He is one of the many accomplices of the devil in these hearts of ours. Let us not blind our eyes to his presence or to his power. Let us *watch and pray always*¹, as against the temptations of the flesh, as against the crafts of the devil, as against the solicitations of pleasure, the illusions of fashion, or the intimidations of the world; so also against the false glare of an enlightenment professing to be *wise above what is written*², against the sophistries, the insolences, and the ignorances, of a philosophy which knows not and seeks not God!

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is our true light, our certain guide. With it in our hearts, we need not fear. While we read the Gospel, while we trust in Christ, while we worship God, while we cherish the Spirit, we may ask what we will, we may investigate what we will, we may enquire and we may examine, we may ransack the treasures of human knowledge and sound the depths of human wisdom, and we shall never make shipwreck of the faith. The faith is *founded upon a rock*³, a rock that

¹ Luke xxi. 36.

² 1 Cor. iv. 6.

³ Matt. vii. 25.

*is higher than man*¹: let him plant his foot there, and he is safe for time, and safe for eternity.

And this I say, brethren, the time is short. What shall warrant to us the continuance of life itself, with all its manifold openings for amendment and for usefulness? What shall guarantee any man for one day against the stroke of death? Shall strength or health, shall the very prime of manhood, shall high birth, shall illustrious station, shall the happiness of a Royal home², shall the interests (as man judges) of the first of nations? Let it not have been for nothing that this word reaches you on a day so dark and cloudy, so mournful in its tidings, so anxious in its prognostications! Let it say to you, *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*³! Let your prayers ascend to-night in a deep sense of God's greatness, of Christ's sovereignty, and of the necessity of being *fellow-workers with God*⁴ in behalf of Christ, while yet there is time! And let your prayers ascend day and night from this time forward with double earnestness for your Queen and for her Royal house, that, if the happiness of her earthly day be henceforth darkened, a light not of earth may arise upon her with a twofold brightness; that she may *always incline to God's will* even when it is grievous, and *walk in God's way* even when it is rough, may

¹ Psalm lxi. 2.

² This Lecture was delivered on the evening of the day on which tidings were received of the death of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort.

³ Eccles. ix. 10.

⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 9.

be endued plenteously with heavenly gifts, and finally, after this life, may attain everlasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ our Lord !

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT,
Dec. 15, 1861.

LECTURE XXV.

REVELATION XIV. 1.

*And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion,
and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand,
having His Father's name written in their foreheads.*

WE are in the midst of a section of this Book descriptive of the enemies of Christ and His Church. So formidable has been the account of the malignity, subtlety, and power of those enemies, that we can well imagine something of despair creeping over the minds of its readers. *There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*¹. *They that heard it said, Who then can be saved*²? At this point therefore a bright vision of *the glory that shall be revealed*³ is interposed amidst the gloomy disclosures of danger and warfare. The general character of the brief passage now to be con-

¹ Matt. xxiv. 24.

² Luke xviii. 26.

³ 1 Pet. v. 1.

sidered—forming the Epistle for a festival kept yesterday, that of Innocents' Day—will remind us of an earlier vision, that of the sealing and its consequences as described in the 7th chapter. That also formed an interlude in the great drama, a sort of episode in the inspired poem; occurring between the opening of the sixth and of the seventh seal, as though to comfort the hearts of the faithful in the prospect of scenes so dark and so portentous. There is one chief point of difference between the two: the vision of the sealing is to assure Christ's servants of their safety amidst God's judgments; the vision of the Lamb standing on mount Sion is to assure Christ's servants of their safety from the crafts and assaults of Satanic or human foes.

Now let us first read the five verses proposed for consideration this evening.

*And*¹ *I saw*—the usual opening of a new vision—*and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Sion. Not a Lamb, but the Lamb.* By this time the figure of the Lamb is so familiar to the readers of the Book in its application to Christ the Saviour and Redeemer that it may be introduced without comment or explanation. It is the same Lamb who was first named in the 5th chapter², and who from that point onwards has been spoken of again and again as the well-known Mediator and Intercessor, the Son of God and the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. *They overcame him*, we read in

¹ Verse 1.

² Rev. v. 6.

the 12th chapter, without a word of interpretation, *by the blood of the Lamb*¹.

The Lamb is here seen standing on the mount Sion. That which was properly one of the group of hills forming the metropolis of Israel became in the language of prophecy the name of that heavenly city which is to be the everlasting abode of the Saviour and of His redeemed. Thus we read in the Prophet Isaiah, that *the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away*². And thus too in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the description of the present privileges of true Christians in their communion already with heaven and its inhabitants, we are said to have *come unto mount Sion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*³. The Mount Zion is the capital of the heavenly kingdom. *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion*⁴.

St John then in vision, being still himself in heaven, sees before him the chosen city of God's presence, *Mount Zion wherein Thou hast dwelt*⁵, and the Lamb standing there on its highest eminence, *and with Him were a hundred and forty and four thousands, having*

¹ Rev. xii. 11.

² Isai. li. 11.

³ Heb. xii. 22-24.

⁴ Psalm ii. 6.

⁵ Psalm lxxiv. 2.

His name and the name of His Father written upon their foreheads. We have read before, in the vision of the sealing, of this special number. *I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel*¹. The number twelve, with its multiples, and more particularly the twelve times twelve, is, as we have often remarked, the token in this Book of the Church of Christ; a selection suggested doubtless by the twelve Patriarchs on whom the Church of the Old Testament was founded, and by the twelve Apostles who are the pillars of the New. *The redeemed of the Lord* are seen by the Evangelist, in fulfilment of the words just quoted from the prophet Isaiah, to have *come to Zion*, and to be there gathered around Him whose presence, wherever it be, is their heaven.

*And*² *I heard a sound out of the heaven*—not, you observe, a sound from Mount Zion, but from above, out of heaven—as *a sound of many waters and as a sound of a great thunder; and the sound which I heard was as of harpers harping on their harps*. The combination of fulness, of majesty, and of sweetness, in the sound heard, is expressed by bringing together the three comparisons thus indicated. *And*³ *they, the heavenly harpers, sing a new song before (in presence of) the throne and before (in presence of) the four living creatures*, representatives, as we heard in earlier discourses, of creation, *and the elders*, representatives of the universal

¹ Rev. vii. 4.

² Verse 2.

³ Verse 3.

Church; and no one was able to learn the song, except the hundred and forty and four thousands, even they who have been purchased from the earth. The heavenly song, though sweet and glorious in its general sound to the ear of the Prophet who is still in flesh, can be learned only by those who are no longer clogged with mortality, but have already passed through death into incorruption and glory.

These¹ are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth. These were purchased from among mankind, as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And² in their mouth was not found falsehood: for they are blameless. The last words, before the throne of God, are not found in the best manuscripts.

Beautiful and quickening words, my brethren! They suggest two main topics: first, the character of these redeemed and glorified saints; and secondly, the nature of their heavenly state.

1. We may perceive in the character here presented four leading features: purity, obedience, unworldliness, and truthfulness.

(1) *These are they which were not defiled.* They led upon earth a clean and a holy life. They eschewed in every form the sin of uncleanness and of impurity. *They were pure in heart: and therefore they shall see God³.*

The subject thus suggested bears no amplification from the pulpit. Far more of harm than of good is done

¹ Verse 4.

² Verse 5.

³ Matt. v. 8.

by any enlargement upon it. But *the heart* of each one *knoweth its own bitterness*¹: where is he who is entirely ignorant of the fearful malignity of those temptations which come to us through the passions and lusts of the flesh? When our Lord said in reference to this matter, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her* whose guilt is open before you, we read that, as He stooped down again after saying this and continued to write on the ground, *they which heard Him, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last*². They who would have listened unmoved to the most searching questions as to sins of dishonesty or of revenge, could not bear the application of the test to this one most secret, most subtle, and most malignant thing. They went out one by one, convicted by their own conscience. They could not bear the glance of that heart-searching eye upon this one point in their hearts. They must get away before He should lift Himself up and look at them. And yet, my brethren, that eye, not of the body but of the spirit, was upon them all the time, and they felt it; they knew, even if they would not own it, that *He knew what was in man*³. And that same eye is upon all our hearts and upon each of our hearts, upon all our lives and upon each of our lives, this night. And with what result? What does it see there? Are not we too convicted by our own conscience? Would not some of us be glad to go out, like those Jews of old, to escape the scrutiny? But

¹ Prov. xiv. 10.² John viii. 7, 9.³ John ii. 25.

we cannot. The glance is upon us all: let us be still under it, and let us pray that it may work conviction and that it may work conversion in us all.

For indeed, my brethren, we know also that there is such a thing as purity of heart even in this sinful world, and that they who would ever stand with the Lamb upon the mount Zion must by His grace in some measure attain to it. It is not the commonness of sin which will excuse it. God commands us to fight against it; He bids us to *escape* from it *for our lives*¹; He offers us His Holy Spirit to make escape possible, yea, to make final victory certain. And there are those who have escaped; and there are those who have conquered. There are those who by God's blessing upon the early discipline of a holy home have grown up from childhood pure in heart. And there are those who through a more severe process have regained a once sullied or forfeited purity. How shall it be with those who have neither kept nor regained, who have lost and have not recovered? Let us set it before ourselves as a paramount and most real object, that we who profess *to have hope in Christ purify ourselves even as He is pure*².

(2) The second mark of the saved is obedience. *These are they which follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth*. It is not perhaps certain whether this is here made a part of their earthly condition or of their heavenly reward. It may be said of either; it may be said of both. In the place where it stands we can scarcely exclude its reference to their life below.

¹ Gen. xix. 17.

² 1 John iii. 3.

If any man serve me, our Saviour said, *let him follow me: and where I am, there shall also my servant be*¹. To follow Christ wherever He leads is the most general and also the most comprehensive of all the marks of a Christian. *Follow me* was the call by which He made men His disciples²: *they forsook all, and followed Him* was the sign that His service was undertaken³. The call was then to a literal following: it bade men leave work and home, and attend from place to place One who *had not where to lay His head*⁴. Flesh and blood often shrank from this: nothing but a firm and earnest faith could make such a life endurable. But the chief trial even then lay in that part of the work which still remains for us all. Many of us would submit to a three years' wandering in the service of One whose love and whose wisdom lightened the toil, and whose sure word of promise held out heaven as the reward. But to follow Him, as He required, in spirit also; to walk in the steps of His example; to be like Him in His patience, to be like Him in His devotion, to be like Him in His disinterestedness, to be like Him in His temper, mind, and life; this was the hard thing: this it was which caused many to be *offended in Him*⁵; this it was which made many say to His call, *I pray Thee, have me excused*⁶; this it was which led many who had attended Him for a season to *go back at last and walk with Him no more*⁷.

The stress of the words for each one of us is on the

¹ John xii. 26.

² Matt. iv. 19.

³ Luke v. 11.

⁴ Luke ix. 58.

⁵ Matt. xiii. 57.

⁶ Luke xiv. 18.

⁷ John vi. 66.

last clause, *wheresoever He goeth*. Some of us are willing, it may be, to follow the Lamb a certain way or in a certain direction. There are some things which He requires of us which we are willing to give. A gentle temper is ready to offer meekness: a vigorous frame is ready to give diligence. But try the gentle temper by proposing to it some work of courage; try the vigorous frame by laying upon it not something to be done but something to be suffered, some task of irksome charity, or some season of wasting sickness; and perhaps you will find that the word *wheresoever* has applied a test fatal to many professions and severely trying to all. If we would know whether we have upon us this mark of the redeemed in heaven, we must look not at those parts of our Christian duty which suit our natural taste or fall in with our natural temper, but rather at those which run counter to inclination, and which but for Christ we should certainly not perform. Irksome duties, difficult duties, uncongenial duties, are the real tests of our state. It is he who follows the Lamb, not some way, but *wheresoever He goeth*, who *shall rest* with Him *upon His holy hill*¹, and learn the new song which belongs exclusively to His redeemed.

(3) The third mark is unworldliness. I could not suffer you to overlook the solemn, I might well say the fearful import of that repeated phrase, *redeemed from the earth, redeemed from among men*. It is the hope of many, and apart from the Gospel we might well call it an

¹ Psalm xv. 1.

amiable and a charitable hope, that with the exception perhaps of a few great criminals, a few oppressors or corrupters of the world, who have actually defied God and staked everything upon wickedness, heaven will be thrown wide open to all; and that thus the fears and conflicts of the good for themselves and for others, the tears and sorrows of Christ's servants over those who will forsake and trample upon God's law¹, will be proved by the event to have been exaggerated or superfluous. And I know not whose heart has not sometimes been distressed, or whose understanding has not sometimes been staggered, by the terrible urgency of that charge and prediction of our Lord, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able*². But while we shrink justly from the attempt to apply in individual instances such words of fear and warning, we must indeed take them home all of us to ourselves. If we are saved, it must be not with the earth, but as redeemed from it; purchased from among men by the blood of the cross, and sealed as God's by the personal gift of His Spirit³. It is in this sense that I would press upon you to-night the word unworldliness. There must be a difference between us and the men who cast in their lot with this world. It must be evident to any who know us thoroughly, that our aims, our habits, our principles, our affections, have all an object above this life, an earnestness and a steadfastness which they derive from our connection, real

¹ Psalm cxix. 53, 136, 158.

² Luke xiii. 24.

³ 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 13. iv. 30.

though secret, with One who is already in heaven, our Father, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier.

(4) There is yet a fourth mark. *In their mouth was found no guile, or no falsehood.* To purity, and to obedience, and to unworldliness, we must add this virtue also, truthfulness. It is given in the 32nd Psalm as one feature of the forgiven man, of him *whose sin is covered, that in his spirit there is no guile*¹. What has the forgiven man to conceal? Why should he be crooked, why should his tongue depart from the truth, when God who knows all has pardoned and cancelled all? While he was keeping his secret, while he was avoiding God, while he was afraid and ashamed to tell out all to Him and heartily to seek forgiveness, so long he had a motive for guile; so long truth was his enemy; so long the thing that is was at variance with the thing which seemed. But the *hundred and forty and four thousand* are all redeemed, all forgiven. They have told God all their secrets, and what God knows they care not if man knows. They are not masked men, they are frank and real. See the difference between a Christian man and a worldly man in this one respect! See how the one cares about appearances: What will men think of me? how can I gain or keep their good opinion? how shall I prevent this or that from being known against me? how shall I keep the veil close over this folly, that weakness, this vice? It is not so with a Christian. *I acknowledged my ways*, he says, *and Thou heardest me. All my ways*

¹ Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.

*are before Thee*¹; all my past sins, all my present infirmities, all my shortcomings and backslidings. Now therefore why should I fear? If God has forgiven, *what can man do unto me*²? Let me *give glory to the Lord God*³ of my salvation, by making no secret of the state from which He has redeemed me.

Other senses of the words before us are patent and obvious: I select this one as most appropriate to the call of this solemn season. Soon will another year have gone in to its account; and let each one ask himself, What account will it carry of me? Let us strip off all our disguises, and come every one of us into God's presence as we are. *To Him*, it is written, *all things are naked and opened*⁴: let us have no reserve with Him ourselves. Then shall we know that blessedness of which David speaks so touchingly; the blessedness of him *whose unrighteousness is forgiven and whose sin is covered*, of him *to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, in whose spirit there is no guile*⁵, in whose mouth no falsehood!

2. Our time has been fully occupied with the first topic proposed, the character of God's saints. We have no space for the second, their condition in glory. But this we may briefly say; that they are safe, that they are at rest, that they are happy, that they are with Christ. The song which they learn, we are expressly told, is not yet intelligible to us: when we speak of their condition, we fall at once into negatives: by their safety we mean that they are not like us in danger; by their rest, that

¹ Psalm cxix. 26, 168. ² Psalm cxviii. 6. ³ Josh. vii. 19.

⁴ Heb. iv. 13.

⁵ Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.

they are not like us toiling ; by their happiness, that they are not like us suffering from sorrow or suffering from sin: and indeed in these negatives there is a reality of comfort which we may thankfully accept and treasure. Amidst them all there is one and but one positive; they are with Christ. *His name and His Father's name is in their foreheads:* they are marked for His own: and they stand with the Lamb on the mount Zion. Is that thought more to us, or less, than the others? is the presence of Christ more or less intelligible to us, more or less attractive to us, than the absence of care and fear, of pain and sorrow? Alas! that is a question which we dare not answer. It is to ask in other words, What is Christ Himself to us now? What place does He occupy in our life, in our heart, yes, in our religion? Is He anything more than a name for the atonement? as little of a real Person, of a living Saviour, as is the doctrine, the blessed doctrine, of sacrifice, of propitiation, of forgiveness of sin? It was not so once. It was not so to St Peter, to St John, to St Paul: it was not so to the Ethiopian nobleman, it was not so to the Philippian jailer: it is not so to any one of the hundred and forty and four thousand who were indeed redeemed from the earth. If to any of us Christ is an abstraction; a doctrine, a name, and not a living and life-giving Saviour; then indeed we have lost out of our heaven its one bright light, its one positive and intelligible revelation: we wonder not that our eyes are upon earth, that our hearts know no lofty aspiration, that we acquiesce in a life of time and sense, and have no hunger and thirst after joys

invisible and eternal, if in that unseen world there is no central figure, no Son of Man carrying our sorrows, no Son of God swift to hear and mighty to save. There, yes there, is our deficiency: we are like persons travelling without a guide, voyaging without a pilot, fighting without a captain, labouring without a master. Instead of demanding a Saviour, we are satisfied with a theology: instead of trusting in a Person, we are catching at a shadow. Can we wonder that in such a condition *the glory that shall be revealed*¹ becomes to us colourless, cold, and unattractive? even because we have lost altogether the personal faith which breathed in the Apostle when he wrote for all time those glowing words of inspiration, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*².

¹ 1 Pet. v. 1.

² 1 John iii. 2.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY,
December 29, 1861.

LECTURE XXVI.

REVELATION XIV. 13.

*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write :
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from hence-
forth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from
their labours; and their works do follow them.*

THE Lamb of God has been seen standing upon the Mount Zion with the hundred and forty and four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. You were called last Sunday evening to dwell upon that glorious revelation. The character of the redeemed, as there set before us under the four heads, of purity, of obedience, of unworldliness, of truthfulness; and then their heavenly state, as one of safety, of rest, of happiness, of converse and communion with Christ; these were our topics on that occasion. By such considerations the hearts of the faithful, depressed and alarmed by the terrible preceding disclosures of the power, the subtlety, and the malignity of the three enemies of their Lord and of His Church, are appropriately reassured and comforted in the prospect

of the glory that shall be revealed¹. We are evidently now, as in former visions, hastening on towards the great catastrophe. This chapter itself ends not but with the end of all things. The passage which is to be presented this evening has been described as the text, the brief and pregnant summary, of those ampler revelations which fill the remaining chapters of this Book. It consists of four several announcements; three by angelic voices, and one, that of the text itself, by a voice greater and more glorious still, even as the announcement itself is of a greater and more glorious character. I purpose to treat the three angelic proclamations as words waiting for development in the following sections of the prophecy; and to concentrate your attention as quickly as possible upon the refreshing and comforting message heard by the Apostle out of heaven itself.

And² I saw another angel, thus distinguished from Angels whose ministry has been described in earlier chapters, flying in mid-heaven, having an everlasting gospel to announce over (so as to reach) them that sit on the earth: the expression is that of the 4th chapter of St Matthew's Gospel; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up³: the choice of the word indicating, it may be, something of spiritual inaction and torpor: and over every nation and tribe and tongue and people; saying⁴ in a mighty voice, Fear God, and give Him glory, ascribe to Him the character which is His, because the hour of

¹ 1 Pet. v. 1.

² Verse 6.

³ Matt. iv. 16.

⁴ Verse 7.

His judgment is come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and springs of waters.

An everlasting gospel. We shall notice in this universal proclamation of an everlasting Gospel one of the predicted signs of the approach of the end. *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*¹. It is called a Gospel, a message of glad tidings: and yet its first sound is one of alarm and warning. It was always so. *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*². Till a man fears, he can never know hope. The first call of the everlasting Gospel itself is to fear God and to worship the universal Creator.

*And*³ *another, a second, angel followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is the great Babylon, she who of the wine of the wrath of her fornication has made all the nations to drink.* This is the first mention of that name which is to occupy so prominent a place in the subsequent chapters of this Prophecy. I will reserve any comment upon it until we reach that fuller disclosure. At present we accept as one signal of the last end the announcement of the fall of that power, be it what it may, which stands to the Church of Christ in the position which Babylon for so long occupied to the Church of the Old Testament. *The wine of the wrath of her fornication* is a condensed expression for that intoxicating draught of seductive sin which must bring after it the wrath of God. The wine-

¹ Matt. xxiv. 14.

² Matt. iv. 17.

³ Verse 8.

cup of her fornication is also the wine-cup of the divine displeasure and judgment. *Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*¹. Judgment is sin itself given back developed to the sinner².

*And*³ *another angel, a third, followed them, saying in a mighty voice, If any man worships the wild beast and his image, according to the description of the preceding chapter*⁴, *and receives a mark, the mark of which we read in the same chapter as the condition of commerce with the world, upon his forehead or on to his hand; he*⁵ *also himself, as well as the great enemy whom he serves, shall drink of that wine of the wrath of God which is mingled unmixed (undiluted) in the cup of His indignation, and shall be tormented in fire and brimstone in the presence of the angels and in the presence of the Lamb.* He who has been driven by the fear of man to a compromise with evil shall find that there was a fear behind, could he but have felt it, stronger still and more formidable, the fear of God and of His judgment upon all sin. *Fear not them which kill the body*—would that the words might ring betimes in the hearts of us who are still among the living—but *are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*⁶. *And*⁷ *the smoke of their torment goes up unto ages of ages*—the figure is derived from well-known passages of the historical and prophetic Scriptures⁸—*and they have not rest, by day and by night, who worship*

¹ James i. 15.² 2 Cor. v. 10. Gal. vi. 7, 8.³ Verse 9.⁴ Rev. xiii. 15, 16.⁵ Verse 10.⁶ Matt. x. 28.⁷ Verse 11.⁸ Gen. xix. 28. Isai. xxxiv. 10.

the wild beast and his image, and if any one receives the mark of his name. Rest of inaction there is none in the eternal world: some rest not day nor night from praise¹; others rest not day nor night from suffering: no soul once created can again cease from existence and from consciousness. *Here² is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.* In the willingness to wait for rest and for redress until God Himself shall thus arise to rid them for ever of their adversaries is seen that spirit of patience which is one of the chief characteristics of the saints of God.

And³ I heard a voice out of the heaven saying, Write; record for the Church's comfort this revelation which follows: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, in order that they shall (may) rest from their toils: and their works follow with them. The words *from henceforth* can scarcely be severed from the time of the proclamation. The end is drawing on. The everlasting Gospel is being preached to all nations in immediate anticipation of the Saviour's Advent. The fall of the embodied enemy of the Church is foreseen as already accomplished. The future punishment of the wicked is announced as determined and instant. The accompanying revelation of the blessedness of the dead is coupled with the words *from henceforth*; as though that blessedness were about to receive its final and complete fulfilment. It is at the time of the end that the blessedness of the dead will be consummated in a sense

¹ Rev. iv. 8.² Verse 12.³ Verse 13.

not before perfected. Resurrection is needed to convert fulness of rest into fulness of joy.

The voice of the consenting Spirit ratifies the announcement. *Yea, saith the Spirit*; even so; the word is true and faithful: *blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*, and die *in order that they may rest from their toils*: the expression denotes not exertion only, but wearisome and exhausting exertion. *And their works*, their works of love and faith done in a lifetime spent below, *follow with them*; attend and accompany them as it were into that eternal world where nothing truly done for Christ in this life shall in any wise lose its due recompence of reward. Let us ponder the words.

It is obviously of the utmost moment that we rightly understand who are spoken of. Alas, my brethren, the context has warned us that the blessing here pronounced is not for all. The blessed dead are placed in marked contrast with those who in this life have borne the mark of the beast, which is the world, on their forehead and upon their hand. How glad are we, for ourselves and for those dear to us, when it comes to the last solemn moment, to forget that there is any distinction between the death of the righteous and of the wicked, between the death of one who has loved and served Christ and of one who has lived *without Him in the world*¹! It seems so hard to preserve that distinction when the day of grace, for good or for evil, is ended, and when the earth is now open to receive the poor corruptible frame

¹ Eph. ii. 12.

which can no longer henceforth do good or do evil. And indeed we count it no mark of true faith, but the very contrary, to speak at such a moment words of severity to the sorrowing survivors. *Charity hopeth* as well as *endureth all things*¹. And the Church itself utters promiscuously over all her members, over all who have once been incorporated into her by Christian baptism and have never been cut off from her by a sentence of formal excommunication, every word of comfort and of expectation which she has in her treasure-house for the most exemplary and the most devoted. The words of the text itself are read thus by the graves of many whose Christian course has been far from stedfast, far from consistent, far from exemplary or devoted. Thus it is and thus it must be, unless the words, *Let both grow together until the harvest*², be expunged from our Gospels, or man presumes to seat himself in that tribunal of judgment which belongs only to Him by whom characters are tested and *by whom actions are weighed*³.

But if man is thus to stand aside from the office of judgment, more than ever is it necessary that we should try and judge ourselves. And those words which it would be cruel to utter in the house of mourning and under the pressure of a late bereavement, it is the more needful, on that very account, to impress upon all alike in the house of God in days of health and vigour, while yet self-examination differs from a last judgment, and even self-condemnation (if it be so) from the final condemnation of God.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.² Matt. xiii. 30.³ 1 Sam. ii. 3.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. It is in these last words that the anxious, the critical question lies. To die in the Lord we must first have been in the Lord. I am entering into no disputed doctrines. I do not say for how long a person must have been in the Lord before he can die in the Lord. I have a very deep conviction of the freeness of God's mercy, of the power of His grace, and of the reality of that transition by which a penitent sinner crosses over from death unto life. I read in the Bible how rapid in God's hands may be the work of repentance, faith, and holiness, in the heart of a sinful man. We could not visit a bed of sickness, we could scarcely minister in the congregation, but for this confidence. We must be able to look upward to One known to be Almighty as well as most merciful, and say, Lord, show forth that mercy, Lord, exercise that power, in the case of this soul, of these souls, now before Thee! But this knowledge and this faith only give urgency to the call that we *examine ourselves whether we be* in the Lord¹. So great is the difference between being in the Lord and being out of the Lord, that almighty power as well as boundless love need to be put forth in order to carry one human soul across that boundary line between life and death.

To be in the Lord is to be included in Christ, to be enveloped in Christ, to be incorporated in Christ, to *have put on Christ*², to have the very *life hidden with Christ in God*³. These are figures, expressive and Scrip-

¹ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

² Gal. iii. 27.

³ Col. iii. 3.

tural figures, but figures still: what is the actual truth itself which they embody? To be in the Lord is to be united to Christ by having His Holy Spirit dwelling in us, felt inwardly in His comfort and in His strength, and manifested outwardly by His new and living fruits. *The dead who die in the Lord* are those who die possessed of this vital union with Christ.

Do the words sound unreal and formal? God grant they be not so to any of us! For if they be, how can the thing itself be realized in our experience? It is not, we are taught, a mere passing wish to *die the death of the righteous*¹: it is not an expression or two of sorrow for sin; not a mere cry to the Lord to have mercy upon us: still less is it a vision of angels, or a vision of the Saviour Himself, beckoning a departing spirit into a paradise of light and bliss. It is not this which either fulfils the meaning of a death in the Lord, or even furnishes a well-grounded hope that such has our end been. It is not without reason that we caution one part at least of this congregation against building too much upon evidences like these. Look for something surer than this in the case of a dying friend: pray too for yourself, that your eye may be fixed upon something more real than beautiful visions, your feet set upon something more substantial than excited feelings, when now you are girding yourself for your last journey, and anticipating your speedy appearance before God your Creator, Redeemer, and Judge.

¹ Num. xxiii. 10.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. We can all echo that voice from heaven. We do feel, every one of us, that it must be a blessed thing to *die the death of the righteous*; that is, of the man who is safe in Christ. Strange that we should be able to postpone as we do the decision of the great question, Am I in Christ? What a gambling spirit must there be in us by nature, that we should be able to go out and come in, to rise up and lie down, to work and to rest, to transact business and to enjoy society, day by day and night by night through a long lifetime, and yet never know whether, if death came to us, as come he may at any moment, we should awake up in heaven or in hell! May we *watch and pray always*¹ that we be not overcome by that insidious tendency, fostered as it is by the popular theology of our time, to obliterate altogether the boundary line between perdition and salvation; to regard every one as a compound of good and evil, concerning which the only question is which shall finally preponderate; or to conceive of a future state in which the good qualities of all shall survive and flourish, and the bad qualities of all shall have fallen off from them into nothingness. Life is a struggle; the spiritual life is a conflict; there is advance and progress in it, there is also retrogression and decay; there are ambiguous states, in man's judgment; there are heats and chills, gusts and lulls, fevers and lethargies, sicknesses and recoveries: but through all these things God's eye sees, we doubt not, a more simple and single innermost condition; sees here a soul which is in union with

¹ Luke xxi. 36.

Christ however imperfect, and sees there a heart ignorant altogether of that personal faith and trust and love which is the test and touchstone of a Christian indeed.

Thoughts such as these, my brethren, should urge all of us to a very plain dealing with our own hearts and souls. Let us not be destitute—God forbid—of the *one thing needful*¹! *Seek ye the Lord while He may be found: call ye upon Him while He is near*².

*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; blessed from henceforth; blessed from the moment of their death, blessed yet more as the end of all things draws near. Then shall the condition of repose be exchanged for a condition of glory; the unclothed soul for the soul clothed upon with that spiritual, that resurrection body, which St Paul describes as its house from heaven*³. For action, for those blessed works of unwearied ministration, for which God, we doubt not, destines His saints in the ages of an eternal existence, the soul will need the presence of that body which shall be restored to it at *the resurrection of the just*⁴. For rest, for repose after the storms of life, for thankful reminiscence, adoring praise, and glorious anticipation, the soul divested of the body will suffice: *Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*⁵. *Blessed, from henceforth, are the dead which die in the Lord: Even so, saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours.*

Rest. What a word is that for toiling and suffering men! Where is he whose heart does not dwell upon it

¹ Luke x. 42.

² Isai. lv. 6.

³ 2 Cor. v. 2, 4.

⁴ Luke xiv. 14.

⁵ Luke xxiii. 43.

as his one want, his one hope? Rest from his labours: not so much from his work; for that to a vigorous mind and a healthy body is no burden: work by itself, moderate in amount, interesting in kind, remunerative in result, is no curse; a man scarcely would, if he could, part with it. But rest from wearying, annoying, irritating, fruitless labour, that is what the text promises; and for such rest who will not be thankful? Rest from excessive toil; rest from anxious toil; rest from uncongenial toil; rest from the provocations of men; rest from *the strife of tongues*¹; rest from jealousy and coldness and suspicion and ingratitude; rest, above all, from failure, from failures without, and from failures within; from the sense of incomplete, of frustrated, of misdirected, vain, injurious toil; of good left undone when most desired, of evil too often done when intention, resolution, and purpose were most against it. To rest from these things will be motive enough for dying. *He that is dead is freed from sin*². And there are other troubles too from which a Christian will find rest in death. Doubt and anxiety never wholly excluded in life; doubt of mind, and doubt of heart; long searchings after truth, and scarce a glimmering of light attained; painful misgivings as to *things most surely believed*³ yet eluding too often the hand that would actually grasp them; anxieties for our own safety, and anxieties more bitter still for the eternal safety of another; wrestlings in prayer for the one and for the other, protracted to weariness and at last not decisive: who shall enumerate

¹ Psalm xxxi. 20.² Rom. vi. 7.³ Luke i. 1.

all the ills from which the text promises deliverance when it says that they who die in the Lord shall from that moment rest from their labours ; rest from their toils, and rest also from their troubles ?

And their works follow with them. Not one act honestly done for Christ ; done in humility, done in sincerity, done in earnestness, done in unselfishness ; shall fail or be forgotten when the joyful summons shall be heard at evening, *Call the labourers, and give them their hire*¹. We dwell not upon these things: we ask rather, Where is that one act of mine which, I do not say deserves, but could possibly receive, a recompence ? We know from the sure word of inspiration that they who hear in the judgment of deeds of mercy done to their suffering Lord below exclaim in amazement, *Lord, when saw we Thee in distress, and succoured Thee*² ? It is not for man to anticipate the reward of his deeds on earth: he knows that the very best of them needs itself to be forgiven, needs to be washed in tears of repentance and sanctified through a more availing blood. This is well. *When we have done all those things which are commanded us*, we ought to say, *We are unprofitable servants, we have done at best what it was our duty to do*³: rather have we sinned and gone astray times without number. Nevertheless the word of God standeth sure. *They shall rest from their labours: and their works follow with them.*

Let us pray to God, every one of us, that He will be

¹ Matt. xx. 8.

² Matt. xxv. 37.

³ Luke xvii. 10.

pleased so to prosper His word this day heard amongst us, that we may awake *from the death of sin to the life of righteousness*. Let not indifference, let not indolence, let not self-complacency, let not self-delusion, so reign among us as to multiply dubious deathbeds and frightful resurrections. As God sees us, thus and not otherwise let us see ourselves. May He grant that a work thorough and substantial be wrought in this congregation while there is time; that having first *lived to the Lord*, we may also *die to the Lord*, even as He to *this end both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living*¹! May He say to each of us, as He dismisses us in peace out of this life, *Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days*²!

¹ Rom. xiv. 8, 9.

² Dan. xii. 13.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

January 5, 1862.

LECTURE XXVII.

REVELATION XIV. 15, 18.

*The harvest of the earth is ripe. Her grapes are
fully ripe.*

*THE end of all things is at hand*¹. We have read of the blessedness of the Christian dead; that blessedness which from the first has been one of rest, and which *from henceforth* shall be one of glory also. The fulfilment of that saying is in the event now to be described. We are to speak to-night of a harvest and of a vintage. How deeply we are all concerned in this revelation will be evident as we proceed. And God grant that before we conclude our hearts may be so impressed and solemnized by the great subject, that we may go hence with fixed resolutions and with earnest heart-deep prayer.

*And*² *I saw, and behold, a white cloud.* We know now what is coming. That expression, a cloud, a white cloud, is the signal of the second Advent. *This*

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 7.

² Verse 14.

same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven¹. In like manner: and how then did He go? While they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight². Even thus shall He return. Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory³. We are quite prepared therefore for the next words. *And upon the cloud One seated like to a son of man.* The description is precisely that of the preliminary vision of this Book. *And in the midst of the candlesticks One like unto a son of man⁴; One who described Himself in the words which follow, I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore⁵.* The original is found once again in the Prophet Daniel: *I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom...His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed⁶.*

Having upon His head a golden crown, the symbol of His coming kingdom, and in His hand a sharp sickle. Bear in mind the two passages, one in the Old Testament, the other in the New, in which the sickle, whether in prophecy or parable, is figuratively introduced. The one is found in the book of the

¹ Acts i. 11.² Acts i. 9.³ Luke xxi. 27.⁴ Rev. i. 13.⁵ Rev. i. 17, 18.⁶ Dan. vii. 13, 14.

Prophet Joel. *Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe...for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision*¹. And the other in the Gospel of St Mark. *So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come*². In these two passages lies the explanation of the twofold use of the sickle in the paragraph before us.

*And*³ *another angel*, besides those already mentioned in this Book, and more particularly in the earlier verses of this chapter, *came forth out of the temple*, out of the shrine which is God's presence, *crying in a mighty voice to Him that was seated upon the cloud, Send (put forth) thy sickle, and reap; because the hour is come to reap, because the harvest of the earth is dried (ripe)*. The commission to reap comes to the Son from the Father. *Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father*⁴. *The Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the*

¹ Joel iii. 12, 13, 14.

² Mark iv. 26—29.

³ Verse 15.

⁴ Mark xiii. 32.

*Son of Man. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge*¹.

*And*² *He that was seated upon the cloud cast His sickle upon the earth*, in token of the process to which He was called, *and the earth was reaped*.

*And*³ *another angel came forth out of the temple which was in the heaven, having himself also*, as well as the Son of Man, *a sharp sickle*. You will notice the distinction of persons. The Son of Man had a sharp sickle which was employed for the reaping. This angel has a sharp sickle, and there is a difference in its use.

*And*⁴ *another angel came forth out of the altar, he who hath authority over the fire*; that is, as we read in the 8th chapter, *over the fire of the altar*⁵. Fire is the emblem of judgment. Authority over fire is a commission of judgment. And we shall bear in mind the vision of an earlier chapter in which the souls of the martyred saints are seen, at the opening of the fifth seal, as lying below the altar on which they have been as it were offered up to God as a burnt sacrifice, and crying, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge*⁶? We shall expect therefore in the passage now under consideration some display of the divine judgment upon a world which has persecuted the saints of God. *And he called with a mighty cry to him that had the sharp sickle*, that is to the Angel of the 17th verse, *saying, Send (put forth) thy sharp*

¹ John v. 27, 30.

² Verse 16.

³ Verse 17.

⁴ Verse 18.

⁵ Rev. viii. 5.

⁶ Rev. vi. 9, 10.

sickle, and gather in the vintage of the bunches of the vine of the earth; because the cluster of the earth is exactly ripe. And¹ the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered in the vintage of the vine of the earth, and cast it into the winepress of the wrath of God, the great winepress. And² the winepress was trodden without the city; and there came forth blood out of the winepress as far as, to the height of, the bridles of the horses, from a distance of, over an area measuring in extent, a thousand six hundred furlongs.

Wine is called in Scripture from the resemblance of colour the blood of the grape. He washed his garments in wine, it is said of Judah in the last blessing of Jacob, and his clothes in the blood of grapes³. Thou didst drink, it is said to Israel in the song of Moses, the pure blood of the grape⁴. Elsewhere the figure is reversed. Wine is used for blood, and to tread the winepress is to execute a sanguinary vengeance. Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, it is asked in ancient prophecy of the victorious Messiah, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone, such is the reply, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come⁵. The vintage of the earth is its great and final judgment.

The city spoken of in the last verse is the holy city Jerusalem, used as elsewhere for the Church of Christ.

¹ Verse 19.

² Verse 20.

³ Gen. xlix. 11.

⁴ Deut. xxxii. 14.

⁵ Isai. lxiii. 2—4.

The winepress is trodden outside this city; to indicate that the judgments described affect not the faithful servants of God. To them belongs, not the vintage of wrath, but the harvest of love.

As far as the bridles of the horses. The scene presented is that of a conquering host accompanying and sharing the triumph of a Divine Leader. It is an anticipation of the disclosures of a later chapter. *I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean*¹.

The depth of the sea of blood is up to the bridles of the horses; and its extent is a thousand and six hundred furlongs. The judgment is coextensive with the earth. The vine reaped is the vine of the earth. And therefore the symbol of the extent of the judgment is the symbol of the earth itself; of its four corners, its four quarters, its four winds, its four aspects; the number four multiplied into itself and then amplified into hundreds. The extent of the world-wide judgment was a space designated in figure as one of *sixteen hundred furlongs*.

Thus the whole vision has divided itself before us into two great portions. There is a harvest, and there is a vintage. In the one there is an ingathering into the divine garner of true and solid grain. In the other

¹ Rev. xix. 11, 14.

there is a treading in the winepress of wrath of the ripened clusters of the vine of the earth. We will not say that the two figures are never interchanged in Scripture. We will not say that the emblem of harvest is never used in Scripture for the judgment of sinners, or the emblem of vintage never used in Scripture for the ingathering of the saints. In the parable of the tares certainly the two are blended. *In the time of harvest, explained afterwards as the end of the world, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn*¹. And yet even in that parable there is not wanting one special feature of the scene here presented. *The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire*². He says not that the same agency shall be employed to reap the harvest of the righteous. Rather is it implied that an act more directly divine shall *gather His wheat into the garner*³. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*⁴.

Such at all events is the account here given us of that last judgment. The Son of Man puts forth the sickle which is to reap the earth. It is He who binds one by one the sheaves of ripe corn which are to constitute the world's great harvest. It is He who, when all stand ready for the last removal, conveys them safely into the eternal garner. It is He (to drop the language

¹ Matt. xiii. 30, 39.

² Matt. xiii. 41, 42.

³ Matt. iii. 12.

⁴ Matt. xiii. 43.

of allegory) who both carries to His rest the individual Christian, and shall gather together all who have separately departed in the great and final miracle of *the resurrection of the just*¹. In the vintage of the earth it is not so. The ministry of wrath is executed by other hands. Not the Son of Man, but the Angel, gathers the vine of the earth, and casts it into the winepress of the wrath of God.

And is there not a beauty and a tenderness in this contrast? It is as though that Son of Man and Son of God, who is *the Judge of quick and dead*², the Judge alike of the righteous and of the wicked, loved one half of His office and loved not the other. It is as though He cherished as His own prerogative the harvest of the earth, and were glad to delegate to other hands the vintage. It is as though the ministry of mercy were His chosen office, and the ministry of wrath His stern necessity. *One like unto the Son of Man* puts forth the sickle of the ingathering: one of created though it be of angelic nature is employed to send forth the sickle of the destruction.

But while we dwell thankfully upon the thought thus presented, we must beware of pressing it into consequences unreal and unscriptural. The overthrow of evil, the casting down and casting out of all sin and of all who have obstinately done and loved iniquity, is a work essentially belonging to the Redeemer and the Mediator. Without it His other work were imperfect, were defec-

¹ Luke xiv. 14.

² Acts x. 42.

tive, were but half done. We must not so speak of mercy as to forget justice and judgment. We distinguish between the two; but in God's sight it may be the two are one. To permit the permanence of evil, to acquiesce in the triumph of those who do and love iniquity, would be to leave the righteous unsaved, and *the work of righteousness*¹ undone for ever. The act of judgment must be done: we say only that the Saviour loves better, and claims more immediately and exclusively as His own, the work of grace and the office of salvation.

And now, my brethren, let us fix our latest thoughts this evening upon the brief words read as the text. *The harvest of the earth is ripe*: such is the cry to the reaper. *Her grapes are fully ripe*: such is the cry to the vine-gatherer. We may regard either of the two, first collectively, and afterwards individually.

1. When that day comes of which the revelation before us gives warning, the day of the second coming of the Son of Man, it will be because the harvest of the earth is ripe. The amount of produce which is capable of production will then indeed have been produced. The harvest of good upon earth will be ripe for the ingathering. It is a serious thought and full of practical value when we contemplate it steadily. It says to us, It is not the husbandman only who has a destined end of his labours. It is not *the husbandman* only who *waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and*

¹ Isai. xxxii. 17.

*hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain*¹. It is not the husbandman only who looks far forward, and carries on every process of his calling with an eye firmly fixed on a distant month and a remote perfection. God also has a far foresight and a long patience, God also has an end in view, God also is gradually and resolutely working on to that end, in matters which concern the moral and spiritual government of this earth which He created. Though we see that government but in small fragments and by casual glimpses, yet are we sure that it is real and steadfast, and that we ourselves are both objects of it and also instruments. We believe that every work of piety and of charity, every institution which has God's glory and man's good for its aim, still more every human life which has been carried through on a system of divine faith and human love, has contributed and shall contribute to that total sum of good at the completion of which the harvest of the earth collectively will be ripe for the sickle of the heavenly Reaper. A time will surely come—it may be soon, it may be when we have mouldered for ages in the sepulchre—when a voice from the eternal temple shall say to Him that sits on the cloud, *Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap: for the harvest of the earth is ripe*. Often as we stand in the hour of mourning by the grave opened for a new sojourner, we pray that He who has all processes and

¹ James v. 7.

all events in His hand will be pleased *shortly to accomplish the number of His elect, and to hasten His kingdom*¹. That is a prayer that the harvest of the earth may soon be ripe.

It is still more touching, and even more instructive, to apply the same words to the individual harvest. The sacred Scriptures have suggested such an application. As there is a harvest of the earth for good, so also is there a harvest of the soul, a storing of each separate Christian in the garner of safety and of blessedness. *Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age*, said Eliphaz the Temanite to his friend, *like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season*². Here too there is an immaturity and a ripeness. How unfit, how visibly unfit, are many of us for that ingathering; many even of those for whom a safe ingathering may be eventually deemed not hopeless! What could that infirm purpose, what could that sharp temper, what could that unconquered appetite, what could that still struggling lust, do in heaven? How unsuitable, how incongruous, how inharmonious! Wait a while. Wait and observe. Wait and learn. The harvest comes not in God's processes, whether of grace or of nature, at the season of the sowing, or at the first shooting of the blade, or at the first filling of the ear with grain. Not yet perhaps have the clods been broken by the harrowing; not yet perhaps the furrows softened by the rain of autumn; not yet the ear filled by the

¹ Service for the Burial of the Dead.

² Job v. 26.

showers of spring-time; not yet the stalks shaken by the drying winds, or the grain mellowed and the field *whitened to harvest*¹ by the long sunny days of glorious summer. These things God does for those who wait for Him. Some few there may be who are allowed to spring suddenly into the fulness of a Christian maturity, and transferred, long before the year of earthly life has completed its circuit, into the rest and the safety of the heavenly garner. But far more often it is a process of expectation, of culture, of seasonable discipline and of slow ripening. And God, we believe, in each case inspects and conducts this process for His children. If they were not in His hands for it and under it, human life would indeed be a riddle without a solution. Dreary and desolate would it be for any of us to be exposed to life's shocks and storms and buffetings without a hand over us, without a guiding purpose, and without a definite end. And sometimes for all of us it is hard to see this hand, to understand this purpose, or to expect this end. That is because the whole process spoken of is one for faith not for sight. If we could see the growth at its root, there would be no room for patience, none for trust, and none for courage. The needful thing is that we place ourselves, at the greater and at the lesser turnings of life, in the darker and in the lighter places, in the rougher and in the smoother, at the disposal of One *whom having not seen we yet believe in and yet love*².

¹ John iv. 35.² 1 Pet. i. 8.

If we will do this, and if we will not only wait but follow, not only trust but obey, then in due time, sometimes partially here, always perfectly hereafter, we shall be enabled to perceive the clue and to trace the plan; not only to believe that all has been well, but to see that it has been well thus and thus, for this cause and that, because otherwise this might have been which would have been evil for me, because not otherwise could this have been which was for my good. And then, *when at last the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come*¹. *Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap: because the harvest, not perhaps of the earth, but of this soul, is ripe.*

2. We turn unwillingly, but we must turn—it shall be but for a last moment—from the harvest to the vintage; from the one half of the text, *The harvest of the earth is ripe*, to the other half of the text, *Her grapes are fully ripe*. Here also there is room for a distinction. There is a vintage of the earth, and there is a vintage of the soul.

It was said by them of old time, *The world hath lost his youth, and the times begin to wax old*². Two thousand years ago was this felt by moralists and by philosophers. How is it now? Does it not indeed seem to many of us that the measure of the earth's evils and the measure of the earth's sins must be by this time well-nigh full? *Whereunto shall it*

¹ Mark iv. 29.

² 2 Esdras xiv. 10.

grow¹ if it is to grow yet without limit? If knowledge is to increase year by year, and each year with a more entire severance from the source and spring of truth; if the ingenuity of wickedness is to advance step by step with its audacity, and human skill unenlightened by divine wisdom is all that can be set to cope with it in either; if luxury on this side and wretchedness on that must more and more stand apart and face each other, the one in cold disdain, the other in envious hostility; if God is to be more and more banished from His earth, and restricted with an ever-growing jealousy within the limits of an unreal, at least of a distant and an inactive heaven; shall not these things to a Christian eye be signs rather of a hastening than of a procrastinated end? Shall we not see in them all so many indications of the appearance of the white cloud and of the approach of Him that sits thereon? Shall we not hear in every sound the voice of the angel crying unto his fellow, *Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe?*

God grant that it be not needful in this congregation to speak of the individual ripening for the vintage of wrath and judgment! Yet there is such a process: and it is carried on side by side with the individual ripening for the harvest. There is such a thing as a man being matured for punishment, as well as a man being matured for glory. There are those in whom all things *that should have been for*

¹ Acts v. 24.

their welfare turn into *occasions of falling*¹. There is an obstinate hardening of the heart against conviction; there is a resolute returning again and again to an evil way; there is a hearing with sealed ear and a seeing with closed eye; there is a refusal of mercy, and there is a daring of judgment; there is an increasing neglect of the means of grace, and a growing skill in using the means of grace without using them; there is a deepening darkness upon the understanding, and a thickening film upon the conscience, and a progressive insensibility to remonstrance, and (the words must be spoken) a gathering dislike and at last hostility towards God Himself; which, like the opposite symptoms of grace in the soul of the Christian, indicate the approach of an individual end, and define to the eye of the beholder the nature of that end which is hastening on. It is to the sickle of the vintage that these signs point, even as the others pointed to the sickle of the harvest. Let us look earnestly each one of us into the secrets of these veiled and cloaked hearts of ours, as they lie open this night before the eye of our Judge! As yet, through His grace, the saddest, the most fatal sign may be reversed, and the vintage of wrath changed for any one of us into the harvest of glory. But *the time is short*². Death waits not for our tarrying: and dead souls have been chained erenow in living bodies. Let *the dead*, while yet there is time, *hear* in their living graves that *voice of the*

¹ Psalm lxix. 22.² 1 Cor. vii. 29.

Son of God which *whosoever hears shall live*¹. So shall we hear that voice *with joy and not with grief*², when it sounds at the last day through the sepulchres of many generations, and summons all who hear to resurrection and judgment.

¹ John v. 25.

² Heb. xiii. 17.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY,
January 19, 1862.

LECTURE XXVIII.

REVELATION XV. 3.

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.

WE enter to-night upon a new section of this Divine Book. The last passage of the 14th chapter brought down the inspired disclosure to the very end of all things. After the vision of the harvest and the vintage there can be no later transaction upon the defiled and desecrated earth. The next revelation in order of time must be that of the *new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness*¹.

But though this must be the sequence of events in order of chronology, there are parts of the picture still to be completed before we are prepared for the descent of the holy city from heaven to earth, and the final establishment amongst men of the tabernacle of God. In particular, we have yet to learn in fuller detail the fate

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 13.

of the three enemies described in the last section. We have heard in the 14th chapter in general terms that their overthrow is destined and certain. But the particulars of the overthrow have not yet been disclosed.

The vision of the seven Vials, occupying the 15th and 16th chapters, begins but does not exhaust this disclosure. We will read the opening of that vision this evening, and draw a few lessons from it, by God's help, for our own instruction and admonition.

And¹ I saw another sign in the heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, the last of all, because in them was fulfilled the wrath of God.

A sign is a signal. It is not a mere portent or prodigy. It has a meaning: it points to something: it indicates a purpose and a design.

A plague is a stroke. It is something inflicted by a person and upon a person as a punishment or judgment. We shall hear more of its meaning on a future occasion.

These seven plagues are further described as the last of all. Therefore this vision, like so many which have preceded it, will be found to carry us down to the last end. It is not a mere repetition of former visions which have brought us to the same point: nor will subsequent visions bringing us to the same point be mere repetitions of this. Each one has its own scope: each one has its own features: each one presents God's work, God's counsel, in some new aspect, or with some new design.

And² I saw as it were a sea of glass, mingled with fire.

¹ Verse 1.

² Verse 2.

We read in the 4th chapter of *a sea of glass like unto crystal*¹ before the throne of God in heaven: and we saw in that figure a representation of God's counsels, in their vastness, in their purity, and in their strength. The words *mingled with fire* introduce more distinctly the thought of judgment. We shall expect in the vision which follows not only an exhibition of God's wonderful works and ways, but also an application of His marvellous power and infinite wisdom to the office of retribution and punishment.

And I saw them that escape victorious from the wild beast. The expression is peculiar: it is literally *those who conquer out of the wild beast*; that is, those who are victorious so as to escape out of his power. *And from his image*, that is, from worshipping his image; *and from the number of his name*, that is, from bearing as a badge upon their forehead or upon their hand the impress of that number which typifies his name². I saw them *standing upon*, or rather *at*, on the shore of, *the sea of glass, holding harps of God*; harps consecrated to God, belonging to God's heavenly temple. We read in the 5th chapter of the four and twenty elders *having every one of them harps*³. And again, in the vision of the hundred and forty and four thousand standing with the Lamb on the mount Sion, we read, *And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sang as it were a new song before the throne*⁴. Those who prevail over the world and its enticements, and reach at last the heavenly

¹ Rev. iv. 6.

² Rev. xiii. 16—18.

³ Rev. v. 8.

⁴ Rev. xiv. 2, 3.

presence of their Saviour, will need the harps of God to sing His praise.

And¹ they sing the song of Moses, servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. The figure of the redeemed standing on the margin of the sea of glass recalls the thought of the rescued and victorious Israelites when now they had finally escaped from the house of bondage, and in the miraculous passage of the Red Sea had seen the arm of God put forth for the discomfiture and overthrow of the Egyptians. *Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders²?* Of that deliverance the redemption consummated in heaven will be the glorious antitype. *They sing the song of Moses, servant of God.*

But the song of the redeemed in heaven has another element, unknown altogether to Israel after the flesh. Theirs is no mere triumph over dangers escaped, over a work achieved, over a victory won. It is not a mere repetition of the song of Moses in the Exodus of Israel: it is also *the song of the Lamb*³. *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb*³. The exultation of heaven is not so much a triumph over a fallen foe, it is rather a thanks-

¹ Verse 3.

² Exod. xiv. 31. xv. 1, 11.

³ Rev. xii. 11.

giving to Him by whose cross they conquered, and *in whose light* alone they now *see light*¹.

And though that song is one which none can fully learn² but they who have been *accounted worthy to obtain that world*³ and to share that great salvation, still we are permitted here to catch its echo, and to learn something of its thoughts and tones. *Saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations. Who⁴ will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? because Thou only art holy; because all the nations shall come and worship in Thy presence; because Thy judgments, Thy decisions or sentences upon right and wrong, were manifested, are now once for all displayed and revealed by their execution. The words are gathered for the most part from various passages of the Old Testament. And the song itself is heard by the Apostle in the spirit of prophecy, as that which will hereafter celebrate the final downfall of evil, when the revelations of this Book shall have been finally and for ever fulfilled.*

And⁵ after these things I saw, and there was opened the shrine, the innermost part, of the tabernacle of the testimony in the heaven. The testimony means God's witness of Himself; that which He has testified to men of His will and of His purposes. It is particularly applied to His revelation of Himself in the Law of the Old Testament. *He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of*

¹ Psalm xxxvi. 9.

² Rev. xiv. 3.

³ Luke xx. 35.

⁴ Verse 4.

⁵ Verse 5.

*testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God*¹. *Thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee*². Thus *the tabernacle of the testimony* means the tabernacle which contained the Law of God. And *the shrine of the tabernacle of the testimony* means the inner compartment of the tabernacle; that which was known as the Holy of Holies, or the most holy place. We read in the 11th chapter of *the temple of God* being *opened in heaven*, and of there being *seen in His temple the ark of His covenant*³. From the imagery of the divine presence, as detailed in the 4th and 5th chapters, there is an easy transition in the mind of an Israelite Prophet to the tabernacle or temple which was the scene of God's peculiar presence on earth; and when he would represent any part of his vision in connection with the secret of God's personal agency, he does so by describing the opening of that mysterious shrine in which God for many generations veiled rather than revealed Himself below.

*And*⁴ *there came out the seven angels who had the seven plagues, clothed in linen pure and bright, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles*. They were attired as God's priests. They have a service to do, and they have a sacrifice to offer.

*And*⁵ *one of the four living creatures*, of whom we read in the 4th chapter as the representatives of all creation engaged in a ceaseless work of adoration and praise before the throne of God, *gave to the seven angels*

¹ Exod. xxxi. 18.

² Exod. xxv. 16.

³ Rev. xi. 19.

⁴ Verse 6.

⁵ Verse 7.

seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who liveth unto the ages of the ages.

The vessels given are those shallow bowls in which incense was wont to be offered on the golden altar within the holy place (or outer compartment) of the tabernacle. It is an awful thought: the punishment of sin itself—for it is of that that we are about to read—is in a certain sense an offering of incense to God. The Angels who minister minister in the dress of priests: and the bowls which are full of the divine wrath are the same in which frankincense is offered upon God's altar. The description is precisely parallel to that in the 8th chapter, where the censer which has just been used to give vitality to the prayers of saints is afterwards *filled with fire of the altar*¹, and emptied in the form of judgment upon the earth below.

These incense-bowls are given to the ministering angels by one of the four living beings who represent creation. The agencies of which we are about to read as employed in the judgments which follow are, in form at least, judgments upon natural objects, and judgments by natural instruments also.

The wrath of God is in other words the will of God that sin should suffer. God cannot be affected (need I say it?) by any human passion: but God does will that, where there is sin, there should be punishment. He wills it, not though, but because, He is the God of truth, of righteousness, and of mercy;

¹ Rev. viii. 5.

because sin is not less man's enemy than it is His enemy; and because, where sin reigns, peace and happiness cannot enter.

And this God who wills that sin should suffer is also the God *who liveth for ever and ever*; liveth (as the forcible language of the original text expresses it) *unto the ages of the ages*, even to the boundless extent of those everlasting ages of which the very component parts are everlasting ages too. *Woe unto him then who dares to strive with his Maker*¹!

*And*² *the shrine*, the innermost sanctuary of all, the Holy of Holies, *was filled from the smoke from the glory, the manifested presence, of God, and from His power; and no one could enter into the shrine until the seven plagues of the seven angels be accomplished.*

Thus was it when the first tabernacle was dedicated in the wilderness. *Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*³. Thus was it also when the more permanent and more magnificent temple was dedicated by king Solomon on the Mount Zion. *It came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord*⁴. Then it was a cloud; veiling

¹ Isai. xlv. 9.

² Verse 8.

³ Exod. xl. 34, 35.

⁴ 1 Kings viii. 10, 11.

the insufferable brightness of that glory the presence of which it indicated. But when the vision is of judgment, when the ministry for which the divine temple is opened is a ministry of punishment, then we read, not of the shadowing cloud, but of the lurid fiery smoke. It was thus when Isaiah in vision *saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, His train filling the temple. The posts of the door moved at the voice of Him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke*¹. This sign prepared the seer for the nature of the commission which he was to execute; a commission of rebuke and denunciation to a *disobedient and gainsaying people*². Even so it is in the revelation now before us. The golden bowls in the hands of the seven angels are full, not of their proper frankincense, but of the wrath of God, and therefore the temple is seen to be filled with smoke from the glory of God, and no man can enter into the temple until the plagues with which they are charged be accomplished.

The passage on which we have dwelt to-night has its own proper message, of warning, of counsel, of comfort, to each soul here present in the worship of the visible Church below. What if that message, in each of its forms, be to each one of those who hear it a thrice-told tale? I know nothing so formidable, when we reflect upon it, as the thought of the blunted edge of truth. What can be so dreadful, to a conscience not yet silenced for ever, as the thought of

¹ Isai. vi. 1, 4.

² Rom. x. 21.

Isaiah's oft-quoted message from a temple filled with the smoke of judicial fire? *Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not: Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed*¹. Who shall not pray with an agony of earnestness our Church's solemn and ever timely petition, *From hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy word and commandment, Good Lord, deliver us?*

Perhaps we are in danger of too much portioning and parcelling our congregations into the two great classes of good and evil, holy and unholy, Christians and sinners. This is God's office, not man's: and in His great mercy He has postponed yet a while for us this last and decisive discrimination. At present not only are we unable to pass this final sentence upon one another: even within ourselves many of us may be conscious of the presence as of two persons rather than of one; of a good and an evil, a holy and an unholy, a Christian and a sinner. Even for ourselves we cannot yet positively prognosticate either hell or heaven. The struggle is not yet ended for any one of us, upon which hangs the destiny of an eternity. But it will end: God grant us grace to remember that: this struggle will end; will for each one of us one day be ended; and we, with that end, either saved or lost. At present, haply for this cause are we left to struggle,

¹ Isai. vi. 9, 10.

left to waver in hope as in condition, that every word of God, not a few of His words only, may be audible and appropriate to all of us; His word of warning to that in us which is evil, His word of counsel to that in us which is perplexed, His word of comfort to that in us which is humble and earnest and believing.

1. We read in many of these chapters of God's judgments upon sin. With how poor and feeble an interest do we sometimes listen! I suppose there is nothing which a sinner so little expects as the punishment of his sin. I say, of *his* sin. Of sin in general he can discourse readily; of its sinfulness, of its risk, of its misery. But *his* sin, what does he think of that? Does he at all realize the warning voice, *Be sure your sin will find you out*¹? *your* sin? find *you* out? Alas! it is in vain. He listens, he assents; strange to say, he can even admire the sermon which threatens him, he can even hear gladly the preacher who *reasons* with him *of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come*²; and yet sin on, and sin on, and sin on, and at last *die* (terrible words!) *in his sin*³. The Revelation of St John, such a chapter as that now open before us, ought to be a good book for a sinner's study. It tells of God's wrath against sin. It tells of the intimate connection, the inseparable union, not only between sin and punishment, but also between *mercy and judgment*⁴. It tells of incense-bowls charged already with the wrath of God, and angel-hands prepared already

¹ Num. xxxii. 23.

² Acts xxiv. 25.

³ John viii. 21.

⁴ Psalm ci. 1.

with those last plagues which are to fill up the measure of His righteous retribution. And can we not hear already, if we will listen for them, the first mutterings of that thunder? Have not you, so many of you as have committed sin, felt its sting also? Whatever you may think of the darling lust now reigning in your bosom, at least are you not conscious of the folly and shame and wretchedness of some former? Can you not judge of this from that? Can you not even by this experience see that it is possible that God's word may come true, when it tells you that *His wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*¹?

2. We spoke too of counsel. Counsel ever grows out of warning, and ever passes on into comfort. *Break off thy sins by righteousness*², that is at once counsel. Here counsel takes a very practical form. It says, See that you get the victory over the beast (which is the world) and over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name. It says, *Be not afraid of a man that shall die*³. It says, Put not your trust in a man that shall die. It says, Live a life above this life; a life all your own; a life which shall continue when all else is stripped off from you; a life independent of time, independent of circumstance, independent of human opinion and of mortal chance and change, because it is already *hidden with Christ in God*, and *when Christ shall appear*, then and then only *shall appear*, shall be revealed, *with Him*⁴.

¹ Rom. i. 18.

² Dan. iv. 27.

³ Isai. li. 12.

⁴ Col. iii. 3, 4.

Be a man of God; be a servant of Christ; have no mark on your brow but the mark placed there at your baptism *in token that you would not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified*. O where is that mark now? Ask yourselves, every one of you!

3. And some need to-night comfort even more than counsel. Your way is long and dark, thorny and steep, disconsolate and lonely. You hear on every side the question of the scoffer, *Where is the promise of His coming*¹? *What sign showest Thou*²? Faith fails too often, and then your life is dreary indeed: dark in the present, and dark also in the prospect. What does this night's text say to you? Does it not say, *Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry*³? Does it not say, *Look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh*⁴? *I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and I saw them that had gotten the victory, those who for His name's sake had laboured on earth and suffered and not fainted*⁵, *stand on the margin of that sea, having the harps of God; and I heard them sing the song of redemption and the song of the Lamb; yea, I heard them sing with one voice the triumphant hymn of the justified and the glorified, Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever*⁶!

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 4.² John vi. 30.³ Heb. x. 37.⁴ Luke xxi. 28.⁵ Rev. ii. 3.⁶ Rev. i. 5, 6.

LECTURE XXIX.

REVELATION XVI. 15.

Behold, I come as a thief.

SEVEN angels have been seen to come forth out of the heavenly temple, and seven golden bowls have been given to them full of the wrath of God. The special object of the judgments now to commence is the second of the three enemies of Christ and His Church, *the wild beast from the sea*¹, which unites in itself the attributes of the worldly power in every form and phase. These judgments have been executed in a greater or less degree throughout all time. From the day when Pharaoh and the Egyptians in their hot pursuit of the escaping Israel were overwhelmed in the waters of the Red Sea, down to the latest overthrow which history has recorded of earthly power and ambition whether personal or national, at the very moment (it may be) of its fancied triumph—and this very century has witnessed at least one such discom-

¹ Rev. xiii. 1.

future—God has been making *all His enemies* to feel *His hand*¹, and God's Church has been faithfully recognizing in every such disaster the cheering truth that *the Lord reigneth*², that *verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth*³.

But the terms of this prophecy, no less than the position which it occupies in the Book of Revelation, prepare us to expect a more intense and concentrated manifestation of God's judgment upon an opposing and blaspheming world as the last end of all things shall draw on. The judgments of which we here read are described as *the seven last plagues*, in which *is filled up the wrath of God*⁴. Let us listen, my brethren, with the awakened interest which is due to this reflection. We are to read to-night of some of *the signs of Christ's coming and of the end of the world*⁵. This mingled scene, of humble faith and of proud boasting, of heaven discerned by a few and things present and seen trusted in by the many, is not to be for ever. Happy they who are contented to be in the minority, to be despised, to be desolate, to be solitary now, if so be they may be owned in the eternity which is to follow as the wise and faithful and holy who shall see God's face and *ever be with the Lord*⁶.

The Angels had already presented themselves in the prophetic vision clad in the garb of priests, and had already received from one of the four living creatures before the throne of God the seven golden bowls which

¹ Psalm xxi. 8 (Prayer-Book Version).

² Psalm xciii. 1.

³ Psalm lviii. 11.

⁴ Rev. xv. 1.

⁵ Matt. xxiv. 3.

⁶ 1 Thess. iv. 17.

are to be the implements of their ministration. And now we are to mark the progress of that ministration itself.

And¹ I heard a great voice—our Version adds, *out of the temple*; at all events, out of heaven, though the particular source of the sound may not be further indicated—*saying to the seven angels, Go your way, pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth. The wrath of God* denotes, it is needless to say, no angry passion on the part of Him who is altogether holy, but rather that will of God that sin should suffer, without which He would not be the God of holiness; let me add, without which He would not be the God of love.

And² the first angel went forth, and poured out his bowl into the earth. All were to be poured upon the earth in its wider sense: but the first was poured upon the earth in its narrower sense also, the earth as distinguished from the sea and from the rivers, the dry land itself. *And there became* as the consequence of that out-pouring *an evil and painful sore upon the men*—it is the wider term for men, *upon those human beings*, upon those of mankind—*who had the mark of the wild beast, and who habitually worshipped his image.* That is the condition of being an object of this judgment. It is they whose forehead or right hand bears the mark of the beast which is the world. It is they who habitually worship the image of the beast which is the world. Learn, my brethren, what it is to be a friend of the world! to be one who takes his maxims and his conduct and his religion too

¹ Verse 1.

² Verse 2.

from those around him, from the world greater or smaller, from the men and the women amongst whom he lives, and not from God only! *Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*¹.

We shall be struck with the resemblance between the plagues here described and those which fell of old upon Pharaoh and his people in preparation for the Exodus of Israel. That which we have just read has its exact counterpart in the sixth of the plagues of Egypt². Yes, the history of the Old Testament is no obsolete record, no lifeless letter; it is the epitome of God's dealings with man in all time: wheresoever there is a servant of God in any land or age, there is again the safety and the blessedness of Israel; wheresoever there is a proud man setting up himself against God's Word and God's people, there once again is the character and the sure fate of Pharaoh: *wheresoever the carcase of sin is, there in every generation will the eagles of God's judgment be gathered together*³.

*And*⁴ *the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea: and there became blood as of a dead man, corrupt and putrid, and every soul of life, every living thing, died, even the things that were in the sea.*

*And*⁵ *the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and into the springs of the waters; and there became blood.* Thus the second and third plagues together correspond to the first of the plagues of Egypt; that by which all the

¹ James iv. 4.

² Exod. ix. 8—10.

³ Matt. xxiv. 28.

⁴ Verse 3.

⁵ Verse 4.

waters of the country, streams, rivers, ponds, and pools, were turned to blood¹. Could there be a more terrible infliction upon the life of any nation? or could there be a more terrible picture of that later judgment by which *sin when it is finished* is to be made to *bring forth death*²?

*And*³ *I heard the angel of the waters*, the angel to whom this ministry upon the waters of the earth had been entrusted, *saying, Just art Thou, O Holy One who art and who wast, because Thou didst judge these things, form and execute these judgments; because*⁴ *blood of saints and of prophets did they*, the objects of this plague, *pour out; and blood didst Thou give them to drink: they are worthy; they deserve their doom. And*⁵ *I heard the altar saying*, that altar of burnt-offering beneath which the souls of martyred saints were seen lying at the opening of the fifth seal⁶; that altar of burnt-offering out of which the angel of fire came in immediate preparation for the earth's vintage⁷; *Yea, Lord God the Almighty; true and just are Thy judgments*. The voice of the altar is the voice of persecuted and martyred saints; of those whose lives have been offered as a sacrifice of devotion and suffering: and they bear witness, as they look on from the abodes of rest and felicity, that God's name is now vindicated and glorified; that all men see that He is, and is that He is; a God of truth, a God of faithfulness, a God of holiness, and a God of strength.

*And*⁸ *the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun;*

¹ Exod. vii. 19—21.

² James i. 15.

³ Verse 5.

⁴ Verse 6.

⁵ Verse 7.

⁶ Rev. vi. 9.

⁷ Rev. xiv. 18.

⁸ Verse 8.

and it was given to it to scorch men (mankind) in (with) fire. And¹ men (mankind), all, that is, save the remnant who had been faithful, were scorched with a great heat; and men (mankind) blasphemed the name of God who hath the authority over these plagues, and they repented not to give Him glory. Such is the effect of suffering upon an enemy of God. Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? the Psalmist asks: *even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath*². A man who does not fear God will miss altogether the purpose of His inflictions. How often have we seen that effect of suffering upon the wicked! There is nothing softening in it, nothing truly humbling, nothing in any way remedial. It makes him angry. He blasphemes the name of that God who has power over the infliction, *kicks against the goad*³ which pricks him, and repents not to give God glory.

And⁴ the fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the wild beast. God's judgments are now coming home: His *right-aiming thunderbolts* are not only gone abroad, but *flying to the mark*⁵; and that world which has hitherto, as it were, suffered incidentally, or suffered providentially, or suffered through nature, is now sought out in its very seat, on its very throne, and finds itself like an insect in the grasp of a giant, or like a lump of clay in the hand of its potter.

And his kingdom became darkened, like Egypt under that terrific plague of darkness which was the last but

¹ Verse 9.

² Psalm xc. 11.

³ Acts xxvi. 14.

⁴ Verse 10.

⁵ Wisdom v. 21.

one of God's sore judgments¹; and they gnawed their tongues out of (by reason of) the pain, and² blasphemed the God of the heaven out of their pains and out of their sores, and repented not out of (so as to give up) their works. Over them was spread, the Book of Wisdom says of the Egyptians, an heavy night, an image of that darkness which should afterward receive them: but yet were they unto themselves more grievous than the darkness³.

And⁴ the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried, that the way of the kings who are from the rising of the sun might be prepared.

At the sounding of the sixth trumpet, we shall remember, there is a similar introduction of the river Euphrates. *Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates*⁵. The Euphrates, speaking roughly, was the boundary between Israel and Israel's invaders. It was the eastern barrier (with the desert between) of the holy land and of the chosen people⁶. Even so early as the time of Abraham, if we rightly read the somewhat obscure record of the 14th chapter of the book of Genesis, there was an invasion of the future inheritance of Israel by *kings from the east*, and an overthrow of those invaders by the father of the faithful. It was on his return from the defeat and slaughter of kings from the east, that the priest-king Melchisedec met Abraham, and *blessed him in the name of the most high God*⁷.

This one reference will sufficiently explain to us the

¹ Exod. x. 21—23.

² Verse 11.

³ Wisdom xvii. 21.

⁴ Verse 12.

⁵ Rev. ix. 14.

⁶ Gen. xv. 18.

⁷ Gen. xiv. 1—20.

type here presented. The river Euphrates, the ancient barrier between Israel and the enemies of Israel; the typical barrier between the Church, which is *the Israel of God*¹, and the enemies of the Church; is to be dried up, to prepare the way of the kings from the east. What does this say but that an aggression upon Christ's people, a great and a final aggression, shall be facilitated by God's permission and providence? that even as the Exodus of Israel from Egypt was made possible by the drying of the Red Sea, and the entrance of Israel into Canaan by the drying of the Jordan, so shall the last attack of the Church's foes be made possible by the drying of the Euphrates? The typical home of the Church in the language of all prophecy is Palestine and Jerusalem; and therefore the typical home of the foes of the Church is in the region to which Palestine and Jerusalem ever looked as the quarter of danger, as the source of attack. The enemies of Christ are gathering for one last and decisive onslaught upon His servants and upon His throne: God foresees this; God permits this; yea, God would have it so: and therefore one of His latest vials of judgment is poured upon the Euphrates, that the hostile powers may march undisturbed against Jerusalem, and meet their great discomfiture in a struggle the deadliest and the last of all.

Observe, it is no mark of God's favour when the way of an ungodly man is made to prosper. And it is no mark of God's favour to the cause of evil when the

¹ Gal. vi. 16.

gathered force of infidelity and atheism is allowed to throw itself upon the cause and Church of Christ. It is out of that conflict that eventual victory will arise for the truth. Be not dismayed if the floods of ungodly violence or of anti-christian blasphemy rise high against the Word of God or against the kingdom of His Christ. In these things God is only drying the Euphrates that the foe may pass it unhindered to his ruin. *The kings of the earth may stand up and its rulers be gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ: YET have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion*¹. Only be on Christ's side yourself, resolutely and decisively; and depend upon it, in the long run you must win, you must conquer.

*And*² *I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the wild beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs.* We have scarcely yet done with the plagues of Egypt. Here is the second of the ten plagues³, in a form most noxious and most terrible. Each of the three great enemies of Christ contributes an unclean spirit to the work of enticement and of seduction. The first enemy, the *dragon* of the 12th chapter, the original tempter and destroyer, the devil himself; the second enemy, the *wild beast out of the sea* of the 13th chapter, the world in its unchanged and unchangeable hostility to Christ; and the third enemy, the *wild beast out of the earth* of the same 13th chapter, here first designated as *the false prophet*, that subtler and more ingenious power, the sensual and

¹ Psalm ii. 6. Acts iv. 26.

² Verse 13.

³ Exod. viii. 1—7.

worldly wisdom, by which the brute force of the world has ever been directed and supported in its assaults upon the truth; each one of these sends forth from his mouth an unclean spirit suitable to his special work and character, for the purpose which remains to be described in the words which follow.

For¹ they, these unclean spirits, are spirits of demons, doing signs, working miracles as proofs and credentials of their mission, which go forth upon, or against, the kings of the whole world—upon, in their professed amity; but against, in their real and ruinous hostility—to collect them unto the war of that day, the great day of God the Almighty. The representation is precisely that of one of the Psalms in which you have joined this evening. The hill of Sion is a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth... God is well known in her palaces as a sure refuge. For lo, the kings of the earth are gathered and gone by together. They marvelled to see such things: they were astonished, and suddenly cast down². The three enemies are about to make one last stand against the power of the truth. They are to fight one desperate battle on which they will stake all. Every nation shall contribute its quota to that vast armament. They will have it so: and God, instead of hindering, will facilitate that gathering. While they send out their emissaries to collect the promised contingents, God will dry the Euphrates for them, that they shall have full scope and a free course. It is His pleasure as well as theirs that the war of ages shall have its

¹ Verse 14.

² Psalm xlviii. 2-4.

decisive battle. The foe is confident of victory, and *He that dwelleth in heaven laughs him to scorn*¹. Let them gather; let them move heaven with their martial music, let them shake earth with *the prancings of their mighty ones*²; let them say like the Assyrian of old, *By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers* which withstood my progress:—*Hast thou not heard long ago*, shall God answer, *how I have done it*³? was it not by the pouring out of one of my vials that the great river was dried up to prepare thy way?

There is an agency of God; and there is an agency too of man. God dries the Euphrates; the enemy emits the spirits, the unclean and lying spirits, which are to draw the nations across it. Thus it is in all time: man can ill distinguish between the agency of permission and the agency of causation; between that power which stands aside and makes room, and that power which solicits, which inspires, and which directs. That which God hinders not He in some sort does. Often does His Word speak of Him as acting, where a cautious and timid theology might rather speak of Him as allowing. This we know, and thus far at all events we are safe in *affirming constantly*⁴, that all good is of God, and that all evil is of God's enemy. It is of good that the conflict of truth and falsehood, of light and darkness, should at last receive its decision: it is of evil that any one soul is induced to cast in its lot, in that struggle, with the hosts of

¹ Psalm ii. 4.

² Judges v. 22.

³ Isai. xxxvii. 24—26.

⁴ Titus iii. 8.

Antichrist. God dries the Euphrates: but the unclean spirits fill the invading ranks.

Is not this, over again, the very description of the process by which king Ahab was carried to his last end? *The Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Where-with? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets*¹. That wicked king, then in the last stage of his guilty career, was a type of the kings of the earth seduced by unclean spirits to go up and fall in the battle of the great day of God. God willed that Ahab, his day of grace ended, should be made an example of punishment to the generations to come: it is only in the language of vision and of parable that He could be said to plan the agency by which that ruin was accomplished. Even so it is here; but it is expressed here with less admixture of parable. God dries the Euphrates: it is the agency of the three enemies which gathers the kings to cross it.

Shall we stop curiously to enquire, as some have done in all times, what mean these three spirits of seducing devils? It is needless, it is profitless. We have examined the features, as the Word of Inspiration has drawn them, of each enemy out of whose mouth each issues: such as is the source, such will be the stream; such as is the enemy who originates, such will be

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 20—22.

the influence transmitted. Only may God give us wisdom to discern, in our own time and in our own case, the operations thus foretold !

Let us not forget that close upon that last mustering to the battle will follow the appearance of the Lord Himself from heaven. *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth.*

*The mystery of iniquity doth already work*¹: yea, perhaps already is it hurrying to its last outbreak. Already eighteen hundred years ago was the devil denominated *the ancient serpent*²: his malice and his subtlety have grown with time, and the prolonged experience of human nature has furnished him with new weapons to practise upon its passions and upon its infirmities. Shall we not every one of us learn wisdom, even as he our arch-enemy has learned it? Shall we not be wise to suspect that snare which he has found effective? to guard against that deception which he has worn threadbare? to strengthen from above that weakness which he tramples upon below?

Do we not know well enough what is that unclean spirit which comes out of the mouth of the dragon? that spirit of unbelief, of doubting, mistrusting, at last denying, God's express word, whether of revelation, of command, or of promise, by which in Eden itself the serpent tempted, and by listening to which woman first and then man fell? *Yea, hath God said?* with that insidious questioning it first assails: *Ye shall not surely*

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 7.

² Rev. xii. 9.

die; with that impious defiance it at last prevails¹. Which of us has not ten thousand times been seduced by the unclean spirit from the dragon; the demon of unbelief, bidding us first to doubt God, then to answer against God, then to set Him aside and disobey Him?

And do we not know, every one of us, the frog of the second enemy? the evil spirit from the mouth of the beast which is the world? Need I tell any one here present how it assails us? how it bids us think the things that are seen more real and more valuable than the things which are not seen; bids us deem nothing so desirable, nothing so necessary to us, as the good opinion of a man that shall die²; bids us live for esteem, or live for praise, or live for power, or live for pleasure, or live for wealth, and not live for God, and not live for eternity? *They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*³. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only*⁴?

And what shall we say of the unclean spirit of the third enemy, of the false prophet, the creature and abettor of the second? Surely the wisdom of this world, no less than the power of this world, has in this generation a real and an oppressive influence. How does a vain philosophy, a science falsely so called⁵, a presumptuous disregard of God's revelation, a self-confident assertion of the supremacy of reason as man's only informer, and of the natural conscience as man's only

¹ Gen. iii. 1, 4.

² Isai. li. 12.

³ John xii. 43.

⁴ John v. 44.

⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

guide, make havoc in our days of the simplicity of the faith, and end by enslaving to the world souls that were just escaping into the light and liberty of heaven !

Remember, my brethren, the true aim and office of all these influences. They are engaged in gathering men to the battle of the great day of God, and in gathering them there on the wrong side. Unbelief, as the root of all; then worldliness in its two forms, the friendship of the world and the wisdom of the world; these things yielded to must be your ruin, because each one of them alike and equally makes you into an enemy of God. And already the armies are marshalling for a conflict such as earth has not yet witnessed; a conflict of which we know not the duration, but of which we know the result, the final triumph of that cause of Christ which is the cause of good, the final ruin of that opposing host of evil which agrees but in this one thing, that it hates Christ and will not have Him for its Saviour nor for its King. God give us all grace, while yet there is time, both to choose our side rightly, and to keep it manfully, through the living grace of Him who for us died and rose again, and who *to them that look for Him will soon appear the second time without sin unto salvation*¹ !

¹ Heb. ix. 28.

LECTURE XXX.

REVELATION XVI. 15.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth.

WE are reading of the outpouring of seven golden vials or bowls, containing *the wrath of God*, and producing what are described as *the seven last plagues*¹. The sixth of these bowls of wrath was poured out upon the river Euphrates, that great landmark and barrier between Israel of old and the enemies of Israel, that celebrated stream from beyond which from the earliest times came the most formidable of Israel's invaders; and the effect of that outpouring was that the waters of the river were dried up, *that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared*². The righteous judgment of God is shown in smoothing the way for the advance of His enemies towards an intended triumph and towards an actual destruction. God Himself, when the hour of His last interposition is approaching, facilitates that march by

¹ Rev. xv. 1.

² Rev. xvi. 12.

must have his *loins girded about*, as well as his *lights burning*¹.

To this solemn exhortation and warning we shall return as our word of application. In the meantime let us follow to its close the prophetic narrative in the midst of which it occurs.

*And*² *He gathered them together*. To the overruling hand of God is here ascribed that gathering of the hostile forces which is to decide for ever His great controversy with evil. It is the very language of the Old Testament Prophets in the same connection. *Thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land: it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee before their eyes*³. *I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage*⁴. *The day of the Lord cometh...For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle...Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations*⁵.

To the place which is called in Hebrew Harmagedon, the mountain of Megiddo. It was at Megiddo, in the great plain of Esdraelon, that king Josiah fell in battle against Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt⁶. Even there, in that extended plain, so suitable for the evolutions of contending armies, shall the last conflict of all find its sym-

¹ Luke xii. 35.

² Verse 16.

³ Ezek. xxxviii. 16.

⁴ Joel iii. 2.

⁵ Zech. xiv. 1—3.

⁶ 2 Kings xxiii. 29. 2 Chron. xxxv. 22.

bolical place and scene. We dwell not further upon the selection. It is not a material conflict, a conflict between armies of flesh and blood, for which we look under the sign of the battle of Armageddon. Thus much however may be noticed, that the name chosen was one full of painful national associations; the name of a place saddened and solemnized by the fall of the best of kings in a struggle with the most ancient of Israel's foes; a name therefore tempting to the enemies of God and of His people, drawing them on as to a certain victory when in reality they are advancing to a last discomfiture.

And now the troops are gathered. The sixth vial of judgment has dried the Euphrates for them. God Himself seems to favour their enterprise. What remains but overthrow for the cause of Christ and His Church?

The kings of the earth have set themselves, and the rulers have taken counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. What remains? He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision... Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion¹. The sixth vial is not the last of all: there is a seventh behind.

And² the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air; upon that part of nature which has been described as the workshop of lightning and of the thunderbolt; and there came forth a great voice from the shrine, from the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the heavenly temple, even

¹ Psalm ii. 2—4, 6.

² Verse 17.

from the throne itself, the voice of God, saying, *It has come to pass*, It is done. The work of the seven angels is done, and with it the accomplishment of *the mystery of God*¹: the preliminaries to the last end are completed, and the catastrophe of the great human drama is now instant and imminent.

*And*² *there became (arose) lightnings and voices and thunders*, just as at the close of the vision of the trumpets³; *and there became (arose) a great earthquake, such as became (arose) not since there became (arose) a man (human being) upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty*. *And*⁴ *the great city, called afterwards Babylon, became (was made) into three parts*, was divided into three parts; *and the cities of the nations fell*. *And great Babylon was remembered in the presence of God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the wrath of His anger*. It was as though God had for all these ages forgotten the iniquity which was crying against Babylon for vengeance. *The times of this ignorance God winked at*⁵; He did not interpose to put a stop to them: but now it is as though He had *awaked as one out of sleep*⁶, and purposed to make the guilty city drink to the very dregs the cup of His displeasure.

All nature participates in the fearful overthrow. *And*⁷ *every island fled, and mountains were not found*. When you looked for them, they were gone; their place could not be discovered. *And*⁸ *a great hail as*

¹ Rev. x. 7.² Verse 18.³ Rev. xi. 19.⁴ Verse 19.⁵ Acts xvii. 30.⁶ Psalm lxxviii. 65.⁷ Verse 20.⁸ Verse 21.

of a talent in weight, a hail of which each separate stone was of the weight of a talent, cometh down out of the heaven upon men (mankind): and men (mankind) blasphemed God out of (in consequence of) the stroke of the hail; because great is its stroke exceedingly.

Thus we are again brought to the closing scene of all. But in this instance the brief description of the last verses of the chapter will be expanded into a full account of the overthrow of the mystical Babylon, and then of the Advent itself and the last Judgment. Here, on the threshold of these solemn disclosures, we pause for this evening; to impress upon ourselves by a few brief reflections that serious admonition which has been made the text of this Sermon, *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth.*

The words divide themselves into two parts. One peculiarity is noticed in the mode of Christ's coming: and one peculiarity is noticed in the mode of preparing for it.

1. One peculiarity in the mode of His coming. But before we can even state it there is a preliminary question. God make it audible to us! Do we really believe in the second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ? We say every Sunday, *From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.* Do we believe this?

There is much to make it difficult of belief. What do we see? Is there anything outward to make such an end probable? On the contrary, do we not see more and more of certainty, of regularity, of fixedness, in the laws (as we term them) of nature and of human

life and character? Things which were once regarded as indications of God's special presence and special working, are now one after another absorbed in the increased and increasing list of things explained and things natural. Thunder and lightning, meteors and comets, eclipses and earthquakes, were once trembled at as signs of God's concern in matters of human conduct and human suffering. Now further knowledge has dispelled these apprehensions: men can handle the thunderbolt, and calculate the eclipse, and make laws for the pestilence, until they begin to entertain, however secretly, the dark suspicion, that, if they knew all, they should discover that there was nothing left to God's special province, nothing left to be His peculiar weapon, nothing left to be His peculiar charge and care. This sort of experience has had a very serious though a very unreasonable influence upon men's practical faith in Revelation. What real connection is there between the regularity, the orderliness, of nature, and its independence of the Creator? Does not every new law discovered add to the wisdom and foresight and power of Him who ordained it? Does it not show more and more clearly the subjugation of nature to the one and alone will of God? What if we could thus see all things reduced to rule? Would that make God's hand one whit less real or one step more distant? These conclusions are not the use but the abuse of reason: they are the irrationalities of rationalism, they are the impertinences of presumption. But yet they have their effect. They are one part of the trial of

our age. Will you believe that it matters not whether God acts directly or acts mediately; and if mediately, whether a chain of a yard or of a mile in length, a chain of one link or a chain of a thousand links, join the individual result to the moving will? That is the question put to us. Reason as well as revelation, reason as well as conscience, answers it in one way: human pride, human presumption, human arrogance, answers it in another. *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure*¹: and they who are taught of God still rest upon it. *Thy word is tried to the uttermost: and Thy servant loveth it*². God who created, God who has preserved in being, God who set nature in motion, and God without whom nature could no more act for one day than she could have started on her race, has declared to us—giving proof, adapted to our understanding and to our conscience as He constituted each, that it is He who speaks—that it is His intention, at a time known to Himself and to none else, to close this particular dispensation which He introduced; to close it, we know not (in detail) by what means, save thus far, that the return of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, His personal return, will precede and herald that close. The words used, repeated again and again, are too simple and too positive to bear any other meaning. *Behold, I come. This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven*³. *To*

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

² Psalm cxix. 140 (Prayer-Book Version).

³ Acts i. 11.

*wait for His Son from heaven*¹ has been from the beginning one half of the whole duty, of the whole work, of the whole position, of a Christian.

I would urge it upon you, my brethren, that you never allow yourselves to lose sight of this particular expectation, nor to substitute anything else for it. Some people say, I know that life is uncertain: I know that death must come, and may come very suddenly, upon me: is not that the same thing for me as Christ's Advent? We must answer, No: it is not the same thing: it lacks the peculiar power and the peculiar charm of the Christian hope. To be looking for a Saviour, to be expecting the return of One in the light of whose countenance is joy and life, is a widely different thing from anticipating the arrival of *the last enemy*², even though that arrival be for a Christian the signal of deliverance and the dawn of heaven.

Behold, I come as a thief. The thief comes at night; comes without notice; comes *while men sleep*³; comes suddenly and by surprise upon a house barred against his approach. I beseech you to remember that the second coming of Christ, that coming which will set the seal of permanence upon what is, and make your then state before God your state for ever, will have this special peculiarity, it will be a surprise. Observe therefore that every expression in which men of intellect or men of the world give vent to their idea of the permanence of the things that are is a sign of the approach of

¹ 1 Thess. i. 10.

² 1 Cor. xv. 26.

³ Matt. xiii. 25.

Christ's coming: for *behold, I come as a thief*. And everything in you which says *Peace and safety*¹; every feeling of your heart which breathes tranquillity in the present; every calculation based upon *tomorrow being as this day*²; every confident look at the bright cheerfulness of your fireside or at the healthy and happy countenance of wife or child; still more every prayerless morning and every thankless night, when you rise as to a life all your own, or close your eyes in sleep as upon a world which will as certainly be yours tomorrow—is a sign, not of the distance, but of the nearness of Christ's Advent; for *behold, I come as a thief*, and the thief comes, not when men expect him, but when they think not of him, or rely upon the locks and the bars which they have made secure against him. The peculiarity of Christ's coming is that everything which seems to defer really brings it near; everything which seems to make it improbable is an argument of its certainty and of its approach. *Behold, I come as a thief*.

2. What shall we say then? What can we say but that the inspired word is reasonable which adds, *Blessed is he that watcheth*? Against an event so sure in its fact but so doubtful in its time what can we do but watch always? The Christian inference from the revelation of the Advent is the duty of perpetual wakefulness. And what is wakefulness? What is it to watch always? Is it to be ever excited, ever feverish, trembling at every sound, *fleeing when no man pursueth*³? Is it to be read-

¹ 1 Thess. v. 3.

² Isai. lvi. 12.

³ Prov. xxviii. 1.

ing unfulfilled Prophecy with a fanciful imagination or a credulous judgment; seeing the men of our own day, magnified as we magnify them in the fears or hopes of the present, portrayed by face and by name in the pages of divine wisdom? Is it to be calculating doubtful dates and interpreting ambiguous numbers, that we may ascertain, if not the day and the hour, yet at least the year or the ten years, within which the Son of Man shall stand for judgment upon the earth? All these things are the abuses of the Christian expectation; nay, they are attempts to evade the clear word of inspiration, which tells us that not to men, not to Angels, not even to the Son Himself as the Son, as the Word, as the Revealer and the message-bearer¹, is it given to *know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power*². Such attempts, could they be successful, would contradict the very first revelation of the Advent, *Behold, I come as a thief. This know, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through*³. *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh*⁴.

Blessed is he that watcheth. It is to a humbler but a sounder mind that the text thus summons us. To be wakeful, in the Christian sense of that word, is not to be sleeping in indifference, not to be sleeping in self-indulgence, not to be sleeping in godlessness, not to be sleeping in sin. It is to be men of prayer, men of self-

¹ Mark xiii. 32.

² Acts i. 7.

³ Luke xii. 39.

⁴ Matt. xxv. 13.

command, men of activity; I say it again, men of prayer. It is to have the communication ever open between the soul and its God. It is to have the aspect ever upward and ever onward. It is to have Christ ever real to us, the Holy Spirit ever present. It is to observe with a serious steadfastness the signs of the times; to compare the features of our generation with the marks given in Scripture of the latter days, of the times of the end. It is to rejoice with a sincere and a thankful joy in every victory won for Christ in the world or in a soul. It is to *use this world as not abusing it*¹; to use it as a trust, not as a possession. It is to have the *affection set on things above, not on things on the earth*²; to have our *conversation*, our citizenship, already *in heaven*³; to have our *very life*, the life that is most dear and most real and most precious to us, *hidden even now with Christ in God*. So *when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory*⁴.

*Awake then thou that sleepest*⁵! Be not found of Him, when He cometh, drowsy and stupefied, overcharged *with cares and riches and pleasures of this life*⁶, the lamp of grace expiring, or the garment of holiness laid aside. Vainly shall we call then to those who have to *give us of their oil*⁷; vainly *to the mountains and rocks to fall on us and hide us*⁸. How shall we then bewail our procrastination, our indifference, our hardness of heart; our omitted prayers, our neglected Bible, our profaned

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 31.² Col. iii. 2.³ Phil. iii. 20.⁴ Col. iii. 3, 4.⁵ Eph. v. 14.⁶ Luke viii. 14.⁷ Matt. xxv. 8.⁸ Rev. vi. 16.

or wasted Sundays! God grant that this night may witness in some of us that first awakening, or that resolute return, which shall change us by His grace from listless sleepers into earnest, vigilant, diligent watchers! So, when He appears, may we *be found of Him in peace*¹: *when He cometh and knocketh, may we open to Him immediately*².

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 14.

² Luke xii. 36.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY,
March 2, 1862.

LECTURE XXXI.

REVELATION XVII. 17.

Until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

TOWARDS the close of the 16th chapter we read in general terms that *great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath*¹. The section upon which we now enter fills up that faint outline: showing us with some precision what is meant by Babylon; where that power stands in the world's history; what shall be the accompaniments and what the consequences of its fall: again bringing us, at the close of the 19th chapter, to the end of all things, and leaving but one section more after it to complete the whole history, and to bring the Church of God into *the rest which remaineth* in heaven for His people².

*And*³ *there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, and talked with me, saying, Hither: I will*

¹ Rev. xvi. 19.

² Heb. iv. 9.

³ Verse 1.

show thee the judgment of the great harlot that is seated upon the many waters; with¹ whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they who inhabit the earth were made drunken out of the wine, the intoxicating draught, of her fornication. And² he bore me away into a desert in spirit, under the influence of a divine inspiration. And I saw a woman seated upon a wild beast of scarlet colour, teeming with the names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. These are the well remembered characteristics of the former of the two wild beasts of the 13th chapter. He had seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads names of blasphemy³. The woman here described is seated upon the wild beast already portrayed.

And⁴ the woman was clad in crimson and scarlet; gilded with gold and precious stones and pearls; having a golden cup in her hand teeming with abominations and with the unclean things of the fornication of the earth; and⁵ upon her forehead a name written, A SECRET: BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

And⁶ I saw the woman drunken out of the blood of the saints, and out of the blood of the witnesses of Jesus; and I wondered, when I saw her, with a great wonder. And⁷ the angel said to me, Why didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the secret of the woman, and of the wild beast which carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

¹ Verse 2.

² Verse 3.

³ Rev. xiii. 1.

⁴ Verse 4.

⁵ Verse 5.

⁶ Verse 6.

⁷ Verse 7.

The¹ wild beast which thou sawest was and is not. The reference is to the 13th chapter, where we read of the same wild beast which is now again before us, *I saw one of his heads as it were wounded unto death, and the stroke of his death, that fatal, that deadly wound, was healed: and all the earth wondered after the wild beast².* The wound was fatal; the beast was wounded to death: but a supernatural agency of Satan props up the lost life, and is the admiration, on that very account, of the world that looks on. *The wild beast which thou sawest was, and is not:* his proper life has been destroyed, but he has not lost his being: *and he is about to ascend out of the abyss, and he goes his way into destruction.* He is to make one last effort, to be followed by utter and final destruction. We shall see the explanation in the 19th chapter³. *And they that dwell upon the earth shall be astonished, whose name has not been written on the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the wild beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall be present (appear);* how that after a fatal wound he yet survives, and is destined to make once more a formidable struggle for empire.

Here⁴ is the understanding that hath wisdom. Here is room for the exercise of an enlightened wisdom in the study of a mysterious revelation. And there follows an inspired commentary upon some parts of the spectacle presented.

The seven heads are seven mountains, where the woman

¹ Verse 8.

² Rev. xiii. 3.

³ Rev. xix. 19, 20.

⁴ Verse 9.

is seated upon them; upon which the woman is seated. The seven heads of the wild beast indicate, in reference to the woman, that the seat of her power is a place situated on seven hills. No one acquainted in the slightest degree with ancient literature can doubt that Rome is the place to which this description points. The seven heads of the beast denote, with regard to the woman, that her capital is the city of the seven hills. But there is another aspect of the same feature, not in reference to the woman, but to the wild beast itself. And¹ they, the seven heads, are seven kings, representatives of as many kingdoms: the five fell, are fallen; the one is; the other came not yet, is not yet come; and when he hath come, he must continue for a short time.

Whatever difficulty might otherwise have attended the interpretation of this remarkable verse, the prophecy of the 7th chapter of the Book of Daniel guides us readily to *the mind of the Spirit*² concerning it. That chapter presents to us the figure of four beasts coming up from the sea, afterwards explained to denote *four kings which shall arise out of the earth*³. The fourth beast has ten horns; and is interpreted by the Prophet himself to represent *a fourth kingdom upon earth*, out of which *ten kings shall arise*⁴. These ten kings are followed by yet one more, *diverse from the first, with a mouth speaking very great things*⁵: *he makes war with the saints, and prevails against them, until the Ancient of days comes, the Son of God Himself, to consume and destroy his dominion,*

¹ Verse 10.² Rom. viii. 27.³ Dan. vii. 17.⁴ Dan. vii. 23, 24.⁵ Dan. vii. 20, 24.

*and judgment is finally given to the saints of the Most High*¹. In that prophecy it can scarcely be doubted that we are intended to see the four kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome; then the several kingdoms into which the empire of Rome was divided; and finally the power of Antichrist himself, upon which, according to the revelation of St Paul in his 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians, the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself shall execute a decisive and a destructive judgment².

Guided by that clear course of prediction, we shall arrive at a certain conclusion with regard to the passage now under consideration.

The seven kings are seven kingdoms; seven phases of the great worldly power which is personified in the wild beast himself. Of these, when St John wrote, five had already come and gone; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece. The Prophet Daniel was instructed to start from the point at which his own lot was cast, the sway of the empire of Babylon. He looks only forward. St John is directed to look backward also. He takes in the two earliest empires which exercised any influence over the fortunes of the Church of God. He includes in his view the two kingdoms of Egypt and Assyria, which Daniel omitted as already past and gone by. Thus the fourth kingdom of Daniel becomes the sixth kingdom of St John. The sixth head of the one beast in the Revelation corresponds to the fourth beast in the

¹ Dan. vii. 21, 22, 25.

² 2 Thess. ii. 8.

prophecy of Daniel. That sixth head is the empire of Rome. *Five are fallen*, St John writes of his own day; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece: *one is*; imperial Rome: *the other is not yet come*; when it does come, it will be found to be a compound of ten kingdoms: the peculiarity of the seventh head is that it bears upon it ten horns; it has an ideal unity, but in reality it is a cluster of kingdoms; not necessarily amounting to the precise number ten, but numerous enough to make that round number a suitable and approximate designation. The seventh head (with its ten horns) of the one beast in Revelation corresponds to the ten horns upon the head of the fourth beast in the prophecy of Daniel.

And¹ the wild beast which was and is not, even he himself is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goes his way into destruction. The wild beast itself, of which the various worldly powers represented by the several heads have been temporary and passing developements, shall himself at last be destroyed like them and after them. In destruction he is an eighth. In destruction he is of the seven. The worldly power itself is doomed to a final perdition, of which the 19th chapter will tell us more.

And² the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, who received not a kingdom as yet; whose power is still in the future, consequent upon the fall of Rome the sixth head; but they receive, are destined to receive, an authority as kings during one hour, a period limited and circumscribed, and brief in duration when compared with

¹ Verse 11.

² Verse 12.

the whole of time, *with the beast*, as his associates and for their season his representatives. *These¹ have one mind*, one opinion or judgment; *and they give their power and authority to the wild beast*. They serve his purposes, and prop his dominion.

These² shall make war with the Lamb; a power which is subservient to that of the ungodly world as a whole is necessarily hostile to the cause of Christ: but not only so; there shall be a special outbreak too before *the time of the end³*; as the 19th chapter declares to us, *I saw the wild beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse—before described as King of kings and Lord of lords—and against His army⁴. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall conquer them, because He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they who are with Him—again we must refer to the disclosures of the 19th chapter; the saints who follow the Lamb in His triumphant return as there described—are called and chosen and faithful*. The majesty of the Leader, and the character of the followers, are assigned as reasons for their victory over the confederate hosts of evil.

And⁵ he saith to me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. Such is the Scriptural interpretation of a figure recurring frequently in the Word of God. The sea and its waters are emblems of human multitudes.

¹ Verse 13.

² Verse 14.

³ Dan. xii. 9.

⁴ Rev. xix. 16, 19.

⁵ Verse 15.

The *many waters* of the 1st verse denote the vast population over which the mystical Babylon has dominion.

And¹ the ten horns which thou sawest, and the wild beast, on the seventh head of which they are collected, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and herself they shall burn up in fire. Rome herself, when the day of her greatness is accomplished, shall become the object of attack to the various powers which are to succeed her; even the worldly powers, as embodied in the wild beast itself, shall turn upon its great representative; a general dismemberment of the empire shall be the result; the seventh head, made up as it were of the ten horns, shall take the place of the sixth; the fourth beast of Daniel's prophecy shall succumb to its own ten horns; and a new phase of the brute force of the world shall have its day; thus working out God's judicial sentence upon a former oppressor, until in due time its own doom shall be spoken. *For² God gave (put) into their hearts to do His mind, to execute His purpose, and to make one mind, to make common cause with one another, and to give their kingdom to the wild beast, to let him rule in them and by their means, until the words of God shall be accomplished.*

And³ the woman whom thou sawest is the great city which hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth. These last words are absolutely decisive of the interpretation of the whole. Every feature of the strange vision has been separately interpreted by the inspired Word of prophecy.

¹ Verse 16.

² Verse 17.

³ Verse 18.

The seven heads, the ten horns, the many waters, and now the mystical woman herself. She is that great city under the yoke of which the Church of Christ and the then known world lay prostrate in the days of St John.

We will briefly recapitulate the chief points of the prophecy. The wild beast from the sea of the 13th chapter reappears on the stage of vision, with his seven heads, and his ten horns on the seventh head, but bearing now for the first time a revolting and terrible form, that of an abandoned woman decked in gaudy colours, drunken with blood, and holding in her hand a golden cup full of every abomination. On her head she bears a title combining in one view the loftiness and the vileness of her pretensions; an unbounded dominion based upon flattery, lust, and crime. An angelic voice reads the riddle to the seer. The woman is imperial Rome, characterized first by the seven hills of its capital, and then by its dominion over the kings of the earth. The wild beast itself is the power of the world, regarded as one through all time. Its seven heads, operative one by one and by turns, are the successive empires which have predominated on the earth, and through which the unit power of the world has acted and reigned. The living and moving head at the time of the prophecy is the sixth out of the seven. For the moment, the living and moving head may be described as a combination of the forces of the seven: and thus Rome herself is designated in the 9th verse by that peculiar feature of the wild beast himself. But properly the Roman power is but the sixth of seven. Five empires have had their day, and are no more.

Egypt was, but is not; Assyria was, but is not; Babylon was—was in the days of Daniel, who also prophesied of these things—but is not; Persia followed, and Greece; they too were, but are not: now it is the turn of Rome. Will she also, the oppressed Church might eagerly enquire, come to nothing? Can this gigantic machine, this wonderful organization, this dominion at once so vast and so minute, so comprehensive and so penetrating, ever know a rival, a successor, a conqueror? Shall some new reign, yet more literally coextensive with earth, supplant and supersede it? The vision and the interpretation answer to this question at once Yes and No. The Roman Empire will be, like the former, overthrown. The wild beast has seven heads, and Rome is the sixth. Rome therefore will pass away: the oppressor of the Church, the tyrant of the world, has a definite term and a destined end. But how? To what sort of power will Rome succumb? Of what character, in other words, is the seventh head? The prophecy answers, The seventh head is a mere cluster of ten horns. The Roman empire will have no one successor. Its end shall be not a conquest, but a dismemberment. That which follows it shall be not one thing but ten things; not one kingdom but ten kingdoms. Diverse in all else, these ten kingdoms shall make common cause against their one predecessor. The very beast on which Rome has for so long triumphantly ridden shall shake her off, shall turn upon her, shall aid the ten kings in her spoliation and destruction. Thus, in this form, this new, this singular, *this unprecedented form*, shall the last of the seven

heads rise into vitality, and the last of the seven empires begin its reign. And there shall be none later than that seventh. After it, after that partitioned, that multiform, that tenfold dominion, that dominion of a head which is in fact but a combination of ten horns, there shall be no more world-empires. There shall not be an unlimited, an interminable procession of these gigantic powers across the stage of the world. Six single powers, and then a power which is rather that of ten in one, and then no more, no more at all; then Antichrist, *the man of sin*, with his lying wonders and his blasphemous pretensions; and then the end; *the Lord shall consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming*¹.

My brethren, St John lived in the time of the vitality of the sixth head, and we live in the time of the vitality of the seventh. In many respects the world and its events move slowly. Centuries passed after St John was laid, last and alone of the Apostles, in his tranquil grave at Ephesus; and still the giant Empire gave no signs of dissolution. The word of his prophecy, like the earlier and yet more marvellous prophecy of Daniel, lay still and seemed to sleep. Unbelievers may have mocked it; *fools* certainly *understood* not²: but the Word of God never dies, never really sleeps: it bides its time, *but at the end it shall speak and not lie*³. How wonderful must the first tokens have been of the approaching accomplishment of this word

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 3, 8. ² Psalm xciv. 8 (Prayer-Book Version).

³ Hab. ii. 3.

of God! the first mutterings of the portentous earthquake which shook asunder the continuity of that vast fabric, the growth of ages and generations, and threw in upon it hordes of rude barbarians, destined to re-make it after a fashion wholly new! Was not the Christian eye, think you, fixed upon that amazing process? Did not the figures of strange animals, painted by Daniel and by St John *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*¹, seem almost to start from the canvass, giving energy to the dormant and life to the dead? And as the work slowly shaped itself, modifying from time to time its first rude outline, but never varying its one distinctive feature—that of partition not of agglomeration, of a number of kingdoms not of one kingdom, of ten horns rather than of one head—must not men have stopped sometimes to compare the prediction with the fact, the prophecy with the history? must they not have said to themselves, Surely this hath God spoken, and *this hath God wrought*²: surely, if man had been the speaker, he would not thus have foretold; if man had been the doer, he could not thus have fulfilled?

There are those, my brethren, there are in our days many, who disparage altogether the *sure word of prophecy*³. If an event corresponds too minutely with a Scripture to be otherwise accounted for, they say that the exactness of the correspondence is a proof of forgery; a proof at all events that the prophecy was not written until the event was beginning to pronounce itself.

¹ 2 Pet. i. 21.² Num. xxiii. 23.³ 2 Pet. i. 19.

This they dare not say in this instance of the prophecy of Daniel: this they dare not say, in the face of all evidence, of this prophecy of St John. To predict four successive empires might have been risked perhaps in the days of Daniel by a bold guesser: to predict that the fourth empire would be succeeded by a cluster of empires, was a peculiarity difficult to invent, dangerous to enunciate. To predict that the power of the world would have seven heads in all and no more, was just within the reach perhaps in the days of St John of an adventurous speculation: to predict that the seventh head would present a combination of ten horns, and to go on to explain that those ten horns would be ten kingdoms, and that they and no single power would be the conquerors and dividers of the Roman Empire, was a peculiarity, most consistent indeed with earlier revelations, but apart from them as improbable in its fact, as it was at all events novel in its form.

The work of this evening will not have been in vain, if it should lead some one who has hitherto thought slightly of the records of divine prophecy, to do to them at once greater honour and a truer justice in the time to come. Learn from the chapter which has now occupied us that it is not only in God's power to foresee, but that it is His will also sometimes to foretell, the occurrences of history. He has been pleased here to announce to us that there shall not again arise upon earth one colossal power like that of imperial Rome. Not thus shall the ascendancy of the ten horns, under which we are living, be brought to its termination. Nei-

ther France, nor Russia, nor any single state of the East or of the West, shall be by itself the seventh head of the beast which is the world. The time has been, the time may be, when some one such power shall go far towards realizing for a moment the dream of universal empire: but if nothing else, if no arts of negotiation and no combination of hostile armies shall suffice to prevent it, Nature herself in the hands of God shall come to the aid of his prophecy; the conqueror in the moment of his fancied triumph—we speak not without warrant from the past—shall bow to the supremacy of God's elements, and a force which has surmounted every other obstacle shall be dispersed, it may be, and destroyed by the single arm of a Russian winter! *He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth: His word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold¹?*

My brethren, we live under the most peculiar of all the phases of the world's power; and we are taught in prophecy that it is the last of all. Since St John wrote one phase has passed and another has come in: he wrote under the sixth; we are living under the seventh; and there is no eighth. With what earnestness ought we to read and to ponder the brief saying of the text, *Until the words of God shall be fulfilled!* God has fulfilled some of them, yea, many, since the time that St John *fell on sleep*². He has caused the curtain to fall upon one

¹ Psalm cxlvii. 15—17.

² Acts xiii. 36.

act of the drama, and He has raised it by His Providence upon another, upon the last of all. Who can tell us how long it shall yet continue, ere the incidents be quite exhausted and the catastrophe be fully come? At all events we know this; that for each one of us the spectators *the end of all things is at hand*¹: if the Saviour's Advent come not soon to us, we shall surely go to it; and for our eternal interests it matters little in which of the two forms we are to behold it. Only let it not find us unbelievers, walking with the *scoffers in the last days, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming*²? Let us not be found asking whether indeed God has spoken anything, or asserting that at all events it cannot be this, nor yet that! God has foreseen this our time, and has written of it. We shall see more fully hereafter what He has said of it, and how He has described its end. Meanwhile let us at least know that there is an end; and let us be waiting for it, and watching! It is a fearful thing to be alive at one of those turning-points of prophecy, when a former phase of the world's history is closing, and a later opening. Not without care and fear, not without sorrow and pain, not without many an anxious look and many a *failing heart*³, is the passage ever effected from one era to another. How much more shall it be thus with the last of all! When the words of God are now all fulfilled, and *the heavens and the earth that are now*⁴ are ready for that purifying fire from which shall survive only righteousness, which of

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 7.² 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.³ Luke xxi. 26.⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 7.

us who are here assembled shall meet unmoved that great ordeal? *Alas! who shall live when God doeth this¹?*

¹ Num. xxiv. 23.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT,
March 23, 1862.

LECTURE XXXII.

REVELATION XVIII. 4.

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins.

ALL of us have had some experience of the crushing weight of things that are. The present is the real thing to us. For good or for evil we can scarcely be persuaded that it is not to be permanent. *In prosperity we say that we shall never be moved*¹; in adversity, that we shall never be relieved.

It is thus evermore in human life; and God's Word has it especially in view to minister to this necessity. It is the one object of Revelation to lift off the load of the present, and to make something else, something which is not present, more real and more urgent and more persuasive.

Hence the position assigned in Scripture to the grace of faith. Faith is the opposite of sight. It is the *seeing*

¹ Psalm xxx. 6.

that which is *invisible*¹. A man who can do that is set free from the tyranny of time and sense. He is able to move in the present as if it already were not, and in the future as if it already were.

There is one part of the inspired Word which specially sets itself to loosen the hold of the present. In the darkest hours of the Church's fortunes Prophecy has ever shone upon her with the brightest light; bidding her look onward with stedfast hope, and upwards with unswerving trust.

It has not been given to us of this generation—let me rather say, it has not been laid upon us—to appreciate by our own experience the full value of this part of the prophetic office. There is no heavy burden lying upon us at this moment either as a Christian nation or as a Christian Church. We think and speak, move and act, preach and worship, *with all confidence, no man forbidding us*². And therefore we are poor judges, ignorant readers, of those portions of the Book of God which tell us how, when *the waters roar and are troubled, when the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, yea, a God in the midst of her at whose voice the earth shall melt away*³.

Very different would the case have been with us if we had lived on the continent of Europe but one half century ago. Still more if we had lived in the days of St John, when a man might be banished to the isle of

¹ Heb. xi. 27.

² Acts xxviii. 31.

³ Psalm xli. 3—6.

*Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ*¹. Then we should have entered with a keen and thrilling interest into those assurances, new at once and old, of God's care for His Church, and of the certain discomfiture of all her foes, on which you have been called to meditate last Sunday and to-day. I shall not close the book to-night without endeavouring to show you that the subject is vocal also to ourselves, and that the call of the text is as personal in its application as it is alarming in its sound.

The 16th verse of the preceding chapter has prepared us for the fuller disclosures of that which is now open. It is scarcely possible for us to enter into the magnitude of the improbability (as it must have appeared to men of that age) of the event foretold, the utter downfall and dissolution of the mighty Roman Empire. How had it struck its roots into every soil, and spread its branches over all lands! How did its armies command every shore, its roads penetrate every region, and its laws govern every race! Who could believe that such a civilization was destined to succumb to a new barbarism, or such a living and world-moving energy to the disgraceful influences of indolence and effeminacy? It needed more than a bare and solitary verse of prediction to impress such an assurance upon the Church under Domitian. Hence, in God's mercy, and in His great condescension to the infirmities of His people, hence the 18th chapter of this His Book of Revelation. It was communicated to cheer the heart of His Apostle in

¹ Rev. i. 9.

his exile, it was written to carry comfort into the heart of the Church of every land, by telling him and them that as it had been in every age so would it also be in this, that the mightiest earthly power is as nothing in the sight of God; that as it had been with Egypt and with her kings, as it had been with Assyria and with her kings, as it had been with Babylon, and as it had been with Persia, and as it had been with Greece, so should it be also with Rome and with her kings: *no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper*¹, no throne shall ever be established which seeks to tyrannize over truth and right, over Christ and God.

And do we not see in this connection how great a force is given to the predictions of this section of prophecy by its borrowing throughout the very imagery and language of the past? You will find, as we read to-night the 18th chapter of the Revelation of St John, that there is scarcely a verse which does not adopt the figures and phrases of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, or of Ezekiel. It revives in express terms all that had been written of old, and executed of old, against Tyre, against Nineveh, or against Babylon. And with what object? a mere saving of trouble, a mere economy of imagination? God forbid that we should allow in ourselves such a thought concerning *the Word of His grace*²! May we not rather say that St John could not in any manner have carried so instant a conviction to the heart of the Church with regard to the approaching destruction of the present enemy and tyrant of the truth, as by clothing the prophecy in terms

¹ Isai. liv. 17.

² Acts xx. 32.

already fulfilled in the case of earlier foes? It was as though he had said, You know *what God wrought*¹ in the days of the fathers, against Egypt, against Assyria, against Babylon: Rome is now in their place, and what happened to them shall happen also to her: she sits in their seat; she shall share their ruin and their desolation.

A vivid picture of the fall of imperial Rome, the oppressor and persecutor of God's Church in the days of St John; a picture so drawn and so coloured as to suggest to every mind the recollection of former persecutors and former overthrows; this lies on the surface of the chapter now to be read: and there will be a truth also found below the surface, which will furnish a word of concluding application.

That we may not break the thread of the description by repeated references in the course of it, I will mention at the outset the following chapters of the Old Testament as contributing most largely to its details: the 13th and 14th chapters of the prophet Isaiah; the 51st chapter of the prophet Jeremiah; the 26th and two following chapters of the prophet Ezekiel; and the 3rd chapter of the prophet Nahum. These, but not these only.

After² these things I saw another angel coming down out of the heaven, having great authority; and the earth was illuminated out of (by) his glory. And³ he cried in a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is the great Babylon, and become a habitation of demons, and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hated

¹ Num. xxiii. 23.

² Verse 1.

³ Verse 2.

bird, because¹ out of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, that intoxicating draught of sin which brings the wrath of God after it, all the nations have drunk, and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich out of the strength of her wantonness.

And² I heard another voice out of the heaven, saying, Come ye forth out of her, my people, that ye partake not with her sins, and that ye receive not out of her plagues: because³ her sins were joined together as far as the heaven, formed as it were a continuous fabric glued and cemented together till its top reached heaven⁴, and God at last remembered her crimes, no longer suffered them to grow without limit, but interposed to bring them into judgment.

Give⁵ ye back to her, ye executioners of vengeance, so the heavenly voice continues, as she also herself gave back to others, and double ye the double, repay her double, according to her works: in the cup wherewith, or wherein, she mingled, mingle for her double. In⁶ how many soever things she glorified herself and was wanton, according to the multitude of her glories and her wantonnesses, so much torture and mourning give her. Because she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and a widow I am not, and mourning I shall not see; therefore⁷ in one day shall arrive her plagues, death and mourning and famine, and in fire shall she be burned up: because mighty is the Lord the God who judged her, who hath passed sentence upon her.

¹ Verse 3.

² Verse 4.

³ Verse 5.

⁴ Gen. xi. 4.

⁵ Verse 6.

⁶ Verse 7.

⁷ Verse 8.

And¹ they shall weep and lament over her, even the kings of the earth who with her committed fornication and were wanton, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing² afar off because of the fear of her torture, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon the mighty city! because in one hour came (is come) thy judgment.

And³ the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her; because their cargo no man buyeth any more; cargo⁴ of gold and silver and precious stone and pearl and fine linen and crimson and silk and scarlet, and all thyine wood, some fragrant aromatic wood used like the cedar in the temple for costly or sacred purposes, and every vessel, or article, of ivory, and every vessel made out of most precious wood and of brass and of iron and of marble, and⁵ cinnamon and balsam and incense and unguent and frankincense and wine and oil and fine flour, and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargo of horses and carriages and bodies (slaves,) and souls of men, that is, human lives, converted into instruments of wealth or luxury.

And⁶ the fruit of the desire of thy soul, that produce which thy soul lusted after⁷, departed once for all from thee, and all things that are rich and that are bright perished from thee, and thou shalt not find them any more. The⁸ merchants of these things, who grew rich from her, shall stand afar off because of the fear of her torture weeping and mourning, saying⁹, Woe, woe, the great city, which was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and gilded

¹ Verse 9.

² Verse 10.

³ Verse 11.

⁴ Verse 12.

⁵ Verse 13.

⁶ Verse 14.

⁷ Deut. xii. 15.

⁸ Verse 15.

⁹ Verse 16.

(decked) in gold and precious stone and pearls! because in one hour all that wealth was desolated.

And¹ every pilot, and every one who sails to any place, and sailors, and all who work the sea, who trade by sea, stood afar off and² cried, when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And³ they cast earth upon their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had their vessels on the sea grew rich out of her costliness! because in one hour was she desolated.

Rejoice⁴ over her, O heaven, and ye the saints and the apostles and the prophets; because God judged your judgment out of her; God has exacted from her the judgment that she executed upon you.

And⁵ one (a certain) mighty angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and threw it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence, properly with a bound, by a single bound, like that of the stone thrown into the sea, shall Babylon the great city be thrown, and shall not be found any more. And⁶ sound of harpers and musicians and fluteplayers and trumpeters shall not be heard in thee any more, and every artisan of every art shall not be found in thee any more, and sound of millstone shall not be heard in thee any more, and⁷ light of lamp shall not shine in thee any more, and voice of bridegroom and of bride shall not be heard in thee any more, because thy merchants were the great men of the earth, because in thy sorcery were all the

¹ Verse 17.

² Verse 18.

³ Verse 19.

⁴ Verse 20.

⁵ Verse 21.

⁶ Verse 22.

⁷ Verse 23.

nations led astray, and¹ in her was found blood of prophets and saints and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

The chief points of this description are not difficult to recapitulate.

The mystic woman, whom the 17th chapter represents to us in her day of triumph, is here exhibited in the extremity and hopelessness of her fall. She has been thrown from the wild beast which carried her; the seventh head with its ten horns has taken the place of the sixth head; and when that transfer and transition is once come, the decree of deposition is inexorable and final. The sixth head was and is not. The ten horns hate the mystic harlot, they make her desolate and naked, they eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. Even such is the scene presented in the 18th chapter. *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!* The great city, seated upon its seven hills, and reigning over the kings of the earth, is now the habitation of every savage and unclean thing: in the cup which she had filled justice has now filled to her double. The people of God are called by a voice from heaven to come out of her that they may escape alike her sins and her plagues. The eye of prophecy sees already the groups of mourners gathering around that portentous funeral. There are the kings of the earth, once her parasites and her paramours, weeping now over the mighty city upon which in a single hour judgment has signally fallen. And there are the merchants of the earth, once her customers and her dependents, wailing now over the mighty city with whom

¹ Verse 24.

*the hope of their gains is for ever gone*¹. And there are the traders by sea, who brought from every shore those superfluities which had become the necessities of her self-indulgence, bemoaning themselves now over the mighty city of which all that is left is the smoke of its conflagration. And mingled among these selfish lamentations is heard the rejoicing voice of a righteous heaven. The holy apostles and prophets see in this fall the fulfilment of a divine promise and the execution of a divine judgment. When the stones of that guilty city are thrown down, so that not one is left standing upon another, the disclosure is made of a collective bloodshed the voice of which has been through long centuries crying unceasingly and importunately from the ground. The policy of that great empire, and the philosophy of that great empire; its principle, and its want of principle; its belief in human power, and its indifference to divine power; its scepticism as to all truth, and its toleration of all religions which would themselves tolerate; all had conspired together to make the empire of Rome the foe of Christianity. Sometimes by the caprices of her rulers, and sometimes in spite of their injunctions, Rome had proved herself in fact not a neutral but a persecuting power. *In her*, when she came to be judged whether by history or by prophecy, *was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all that were slain upon the earth*. And at last judgment fell; a judgment of disruption and of dissolution; a judgment full of justice, and a judgment full of admonition.

¹ Acts xvi. 19.

To the severity of that judgment the city itself bears an infallible testimony. So early as the beginning of the 15th century this was the language of a reflecting observer. *The hill of the Capitol, on which we sit, was formerly the head of the Roman empire, the citadel of the earth, the terror of kings; illustrated by the footsteps of so many triumphs, enriched with the spoils and tributes of so many nations. This spectacle of the world, how is it fallen! how changed! how defaced! the path of victory is obliterated by vines, and the benches of the senators are concealed by a dunghill. Cast your eyes on the Palatine hill, and seek among the shapeless and enormous fragments the marble theatre, the obelisks, the colossal statues, the porticoes of Nero's palace: survey the other hills of the city, the vacant space is interrupted only by ruins and gardens. The forum of the Roman people, where they assembled to enact their laws and elect their magistrates, is now enclosed for the cultivation of pot-herbs, or thrown open for the reception of swine and buffaloes. The public and private edifices, that were founded for eternity, lie prostrate, naked, and broken, like the limbs of a mighty giant; and the ruin is the more visible, from the stupendous relics that have survived the injuries of time and fortune¹.*

But is it then with walls and buildings that the righteous anger of God wages its warfare? Is it any impeachment of the truth of His prediction, if another city rises in its turn upon the ruins of Babylon, or another power diverse from the former plants its throne upon the

¹ Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. LXXI.

ruins of imperial Rome? Not so. It may be noticeable, as a permanent index of judgment, if wild beasts of the desert still lie where Babylon *the glory of kingdoms* once spread wide her habitations; if *dragons* still *cry in those pleasant palaces*¹ where kings once reigned, vassals of a yet mightier throne. But not less really, if less visibly, are God's denunciations against a second Babylon verified, if after the fall of imperial Rome papal Rome rose and flourished for her season, built herself churches with the stones of temples, and reigned in turn over subject consciences as her predecessor had reigned over prostrate nationalities.

Against the empire of Rome St John was instructed to lift the voice of prophecy: that was the foe then predominant; the foe which invaded the sanctuaries and desolated the homes of the Church. Cold and scanty had been the comfort for those days, if St John, as some have dreamed, had been directed to keep silence on the present, and to promise deliverance from an enemy not yet arisen. Prophecy would have been wanting to her chief duty, and neglectful of her noblest office, if she had overleaped the Empire, and sought out the Papacy; if she had disregarded the calamity that was, and spoken only of a corruption not yet operative. Those who interpret the mystical Babylon as descriptive of the errors and vices of the Papacy forget how the same thing would have presented itself to them under Nero or under Domitian; how barren and unpersuasive

¹ Isai. xiii. 19, 22.

would have been the word of prediction which regarded only the sufferers under a Hildebrand or a Borgia.

It is ever the office of divine prophecy to start from the present, and to make things that are the type and the embodiment of things that shall be. Prophecy, like every other part of God's revelation, is of a practical not a speculative character. If it had no bearing upon the time in which it was delivered; if it only painted a visionary scene, of which the distresses alike and the deliverances were of necessity unintelligible to the living; it would be an instrument as unworthy of God's wisdom as inapplicable to man's need.

But has prophecy then no prospective doctrine, no forward view, no lesson for times future and distant? Yes; in this as in all senses, *wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together*¹: wheresoever is the carcase of sin, there hovering round it will be the eagles of judgment. We have only to ask in any particular age, What is there in this time, what is there around, amidst, or in us, which resembles, in spirit if not in form, the condition of Tyre, of Nineveh, of Babylon, of Rome, when God thus spake of each? *There have been times*, it has been well said, *when the Papacy looked very like the beast of the Revelation*: at such times, in the same degree, God's judgments upon Babylon were applicable and appropriate to the Papacy. We do not really silence the Word of God by asking what and to whom it first spake. We only make its teaching sound

¹ Matt. xxiv. 28.

and not fanatical ; commending itself to the understanding of the wise, as well as to the ear of the ignorant or the imagination of the fanciful.

And the Papacy too is for the most of us a thing practically gone by. Depend upon it, however numerous and however lamentable be the instances of its seductive influence amongst us, it is not, and it will never again be, the chief enemy or the chief peril of this age. And in our attacks upon the Church of Rome, erring and fallen as we all deem her, let us take heed lest our eye be diverted from a nearer, a more subtle, and therefore a more dangerous foe, in our own camp, yes, and in our own souls. It is easy to fulminate threatenings against a corrupt doctrine or an erring Church : it is not easy to counterwork the mines of an insidious infidelity, arming truth itself against the truth, and availing itself of every advance of human knowledge to hinder and to disparage that which is indeed divine.

For the moment, I would ask you to consider seriously with yourselves in what respects, if in any, the sins of imperial Rome may be discernible in our country, in our Church, or in ourselves. Not certainly in the form of persecution : not certainly in the form of sanguinary and relentless struggles against the energy, faith, and hope of a nascent Christianity. But look carefully into the chapter open before us, and see whether even these sins, whether even this hostility against truth, whether even this hatred of the heavenly light did not spring out of something different, something apparently neutral, if *not* positively beneficial. Was it not as the temporary

rider upon that beast which is the world, that imperial Rome entered upon its crusade against the cause and against the people of Christ? Was it not its worldliness, its addiction to things of time, its absorption in the pleasures and luxuries of this life, its secular indifference, at last its effeminate sensuality, which in fact made Rome cruel, made it a persecutor, made it an enemy of God? Not for nothing is it here said that the merchant princes of the earth were the chief mourners at Rome's funeral. A country of mean pretension, of humble power, of scanty trade, of feeble prowess, is in the same degree protected against the risks of becoming a Babylon: it is not there, it is not in such quarters, that we must look abroad in search of her antitype in this century. But if I see a nation great in arts and arms, spanning the world with its enterprise, and embracing all nations in its commerce, there I may begin to enquire, What are the relations of that country towards the Church of Christ? Is it interested in the cause of truth? Is it active in the propagation of the Gospel? Is it a nation *fearing God and working righteousness*¹? There too, in that nation, I approach more nearly to the individual heart, and say, What is its relation to that world which is the beast? Are its *affections set on things above, and not on things on the earth*²? Is that heart the abode of God's Spirit, or is it the hold of unclean and hateful things? And as I hear, I tremble; tremble lest this steed and its rider be in that

¹ Acts x. 35.² Col. iii. 2.

nation, in that heart, exemplified again ; tremble lest in the day of God's last judgment, which shall be not upon extinct nations and not upon historical events, but upon individual living men, we should be told that we never obeyed the charge to *come forth out of Babylon*, but, having been *partakers of her sins*, must expect to *receive also of her plagues*.

God save us all from that condemnation, giving us grace, *while it is called today*¹, to hear and fear !

¹ Heb. iii. 13.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

March 30, 1862.

LECTURE XXXIII.

REVELATION XIX. 19.

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.

THUS even the destruction of Babylon is not the end of all things. There is another power and another struggle behind. The sixth head is not the last: there is a seventh also. The passage now to be examined is the necessary supplement of those which have engaged our attention for the last two Sunday evenings. When we have reached its close, we shall have but one record more, to bring us to the end of the Book, and with it to the end of God's latest revelation to His people.

We have found in earlier chapters, the 14th and the 16th, intimations of the existence and of the fall of some power designated by the name of Babylon. *There followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen,*

*that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication*¹. And again, *The great city was divided into three parts: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath*². These are dark hints, waiting for a later explanation. That explanation follows in the 17th chapter. It is there told, almost without figure, what is the seat, and what the name, and what the place in history, and what the singular, the unprecedented end, of that power which in St John's time was the rider upon the wild beast. Her seat was the city of the seven hills. Her name, that of the great empire then reigning over the kings of the earth. Her place in history, the sixth and last but one of those mighty empires which have successively towered above the thrones of the earth. She comes after Egypt, after Assyria, after Babylon, after Persia, after Greece. Strange to tell, she does not come before any one similar embodiment of the giant strength of that beast which is the world. She is to be followed by a seventh head: but that seventh head is a mere cluster of ten horns. The head exists but for the purpose of carrying those ten horns. The power which is to replace imperial Rome is a divided not a concentrated force. Marvellous prediction! audacious, were it not divine! but not more marvellous in its peculiarity, not more bold in its positiveness, than true in its fulfilment, in the history of the past and in the circumstances of the present!

¹ Rev. xiv. 8.² Rev. xvi. 19.

Such is the substance of the 17th chapter. The 18th is a graphic picture of the fall of Rome. You were called last Sunday evening to contemplate that picture. You saw that it is drawn from an earlier likeness, and painted in colours not new but old. Earlier prophecies, denouncing judgment upon preceding empires, furnish the main features of this. Those things which Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Nahum, saw and recorded concerning Tyre and Nineveh and Babylon of old, are here gathered together, and written of a later tyrant ; of an oppressor not of Israel but of the Church of Christ and of the Gospel. In the very fact of that application, of that transfer, of that repetition, we see a sign of the wisdom and of the grace of God. What could be so encouraging, so reassuring, to a prostrate, exiled, persecuted people, as to be reminded, from their own Scriptures, of oppressions and sufferings endured of old time by God's servants, and of the retribution by which those ancient wrongs had been recompensed and redressed ? What could be a surer warrant for the hope that a Babylon of the present, powerful as she appeared, and deeply rooted, and securely fenced and guarded, might yet in the mysterious working of God's providence be brought to desolation and to nothingness, that the declaration that one sits in the seat of an earlier Babylon, whose *houses are now full of doleful creatures, wild beasts crying in her desolate houses, and dragons in her pleasant palaces*¹ ? To call Rome Babylon was of itself a pledge of its demolition.

¹ Isai. xiii. 21, 22.

And we were reminded that although the prophecy of the 17th and 18th chapters is in itself a prophecy concerning imperial and not papal Rome; a prophecy fulfilled already in that partition and dismemberment of the empire which was the remarkable end predicted for it; yet in so far as other powers temporal or spiritual have resembled or now resemble that mighty empire in any of its features of evil, in that same degree the prophecy starts forth again living and vocal against these. Wherever is the carcase of sin, there are evermore the eagles of judgment. Prophecy has a first sense which is definite and precise, personal or national: but prophecy has also a second sense, it may be a thousand secondary senses, in which it is coextensive with the race of man, with the scenes of his agency, and with the duration of his trial. In what respects does England that is resemble Rome that is fallen? In those respects the judgments of Rome will be acted again upon England. In what respects do any of us exhibit the likeness of that selfish, sensual, cruel being that rides upon the wild beast which is the world? In what respects are we bent upon self-aggrandizement or self-gratification, reckless who suffers that we may enjoy, who perishes at our gate while we are feasting, who lacks those waters of life which we are rather *fouling with our feet*¹ than thankfully using? In those respects are we ourselves reproducing the characteristics of the mystic Babylon, and in a sense more fearful than any in which a nation can experience them must we expect to be also partakers of her plagues.

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 18.

And now let us listen to that which follows upon the fall of Babylon. In this at all events, not by application merely, but in its direct intention, we ourselves are personally concerned.

After¹ these things I heard as it were a mighty voice of a great multitude in the heaven, even of people saying, Alleluia, Praise ye the Lord; the salvation and the glory and the power are our God's: because² true and righteous are His judgments; because He judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth in (through) her fornication, and avenged the blood of His servants out of her hand, forced as it were out of her hand the price of their blood.

And³ now a second time they have said, Alleluia: it is as though he listens for the sound, and announces it instantly to those waiting below: They have said it again. And her smoke is ascending unto the ages of the ages. Abraham gat up early in the morning, and looked toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace⁴. The smoke of Babylon goes up for ever and ever. The catastrophe is not fearful only, it is final. There is no reversal of that doom.

And⁵ the twenty-four elders fell, and the four living creatures; the former the representatives in heaven of the Church of all time, the latter of every part of God's creation; and worshipped God who is seated upon the throne, saying, Amen, Alleluia. Amen: so be it; so would we have it; the thing is good, and for the glory of Him

¹ Verse 1.

² Verse 2.

³ Verse 3.

⁴ Gen. xix. 27, 28.

⁵ Verse 4.

*whose we are and whom we serve*¹. *Alleluia*: praise ye the Lord: thus is a new proof given of the power and faithfulness of the Lord God Almighty.

*And*² *a voice came out from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all His servants and they who fear Him, the small and the great; poor and rich, humble and powerful, young and old, one with another.*

*And*³ *I heard as it were a voice of a great multitude, and as it were a voice of many waters, and as it were a voice of mighty thunders, persons saying, Alleluia: because He reigned, He by one act has vindicated to Himself His great power, His universal reign, He, the Lord, our God, the Almighty. Let*⁴ *us rejoice and exult, and we will give the glory to Him; because there came the marriage of the Lamb, and His wife prepared herself; looking back upon it in the vision of prophecy as a thing accomplished and past: and*⁵ *it was given to her that she should clothe herself in fine linen, bright, pure: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.*

The marriage of the Lamb. The Lamb's wife. Here first enter these marvellous expressions, hereafter to become so familiar to us in the closing visions of this Book. The Gospels and Epistles have prepared us for them. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. The wedding was furnished with guests*⁶. The ten Virgins in the Parable go forth to meet the bridegroom. *They that were ready*

¹ Acts xxvii. 23.

² Verse 5.

³ Verse 6.

⁴ Verse 7.

⁵ Verse 8.

⁶ Matt. xxii. 2, 10.

went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut¹. But that Gospel of St Matthew which speaks of the guests speaks not of the Bride. *He that hath the bride*, thus speaks St John the Baptist by St John the Evangelist, *is the bridegroom*². But he says not who the bride is: we know not from him that there is any further significance in the figure. For that knowledge we turn to another Apostle. *I have espoused you*, St Paul writes to a particular congregation as a sample of the whole redeemed Church, *to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*³. The Epistle to the Ephesians contains the key to the mystery. There St Paul teaches us that the ordinance of marriage itself is an emblem of *the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and His Church*⁴. *The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones*⁵. The espousal is past: the marriage is future. Read by the light of this revelation, how expressive becomes the language even of the Old Testament! *The song of songs, which is Solomon's*⁶, becomes a description of the mutual love between Christ and His Church. The 45th Psalm in like manner tells of One, addressed as God, yet Himself *anointed by God with the oil of gladness*, upon whose right hand stands a queen arrayed in gold of Ophir, *a king's daughter all glorious within, whose clothing is of wrought gold*⁷. And here we are told what that clothing

¹ Matt. xxv. 1, 10.² John iii. 29.³ 2 Cor. xi. 2.⁴ Marriage Service. ⁵ Eph. v. 23, 30.⁶ Song i. 1.⁷ Psalm xlv. 7, 13.

is. *The fine linen* in which the bride of the Lamb is attired *is the righteousnesses of the saints*. It is as it were the compound and aggregate of all the truly righteous acts done by God's several saints on earth, and of all the truly righteous characters which have been formed in them by the grace of His Holy Spirit. The heavenly Bride, who is the collective Church of Christ on its final entrance into *the rest which remains for His people*¹, is the ideal concourse and combination of all those, *the blessed company of all faithful people*², who have here below been *washed and justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*³.

And⁴ *he*, the Angel who at the beginning of this section of the prophecy had *come and talked with the Apostle*⁵, *saith to me, Write; record for the edification of the Church the words which follow; let them become one of the household sayings, one of the watchwords, for encouragement and quickening, of the Church below: Blessed are they who have been called, bidden or invited, to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb*. There are two aspects of this marriage feast. The collective Church is the Bride: individual Christians are the guests. The aggregate of the guests make up the Bride: but the figures of Scripture are manifold and versatile, and each new application brings with it an added light. And⁶ *he saith to me, These are the true words of God. And I fell before his feet to worship him*. The sense of the wonderful character of this Angel's mission prompted the

¹ Heb. iv. 9.² Communion Service.³ 1 Cor. vi. 11.⁴ Verse 9.⁵ Rev. xvii. 1.⁶ Verse 10.

Apostle himself to an act of adoration. All passes in vision: we need not curiously enquire into feelings and motives not revealed to us. St John sees himself in his vision offering an act of homage, not unrebuked, to his heavenly interpreter and guide. *And he saith to me, See thou do it not: I am but a fellow-servant of thee and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus: worship God; reserve thy reverence and thy worship for Him: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* The last words give a reason why the Angel should describe the prophets as having the testimony of Jesus. The brief charge, *Worship God*, is parenthetical. Bestow thy reverence not on me, but on Him who is my God as thine. For I am but a fellow-servant of *the goodly fellowship of the Prophets*¹, even of all those who have exercised in any age that divine ministry of which Jesus is the one subject. *Prophecy*, St Peter says, *came not at any time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*². And again he says, *Of which salvation the prophets enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching unto, with a view to, what or what sort of (about what) time the Spirit of Christ, which in them testified beforehand the sufferings unto (affecting) Christ and the glories after then, did make its manifestations*³. *The spirit of prophecy* is the Holy Spirit of God and of Christ, who moved holy men of old to utter that which God for that purpose revealed to them. And that *spirit*

¹ Te Deum.² 2 Pet. i. 21.³ 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

*of prophecy was throughout the testimony of Jesus: He was the great object, and the great subject too, of all prophecy. Even as we read of our Lord Himself after His resurrection, that, when He would show to the two disciples their slowness of heart in believing what the prophets had spoken, beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself*¹.

The parallel passage in the 22nd chapter is decisive as to the meaning. *See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets*². There the expression *thy brethren the prophets* is used as an exact equivalent for the phrase which stands here *thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus*. For such throughout is the character of divine prophecy: even the prophets of the Old Testament *spake of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory that should follow. The testimony of Jesus* is another way of saying *the spirit of prophecy*.

*And*³ *I saw the heaven already opened; and behold, a horse all white; and behold, One that is seated upon him, called by name Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wars. And*⁴ *His eyes are a flame of fire; and upon His head are many diadems, types of His world-wide empire as the King of kings; He having names written, glorious titles, perhaps upon the several diadems, and a name written which no one knows but He Himself: even as it is promised in the message to the Church of Philadelphia, Upon him that overcometh I will write my new*

¹ Luke xxiv. 27.

² Rev. xxii. 9.

³ Verse 11.

⁴ Verse 12.

*name*¹. We are not to think of some one particular designation of the glorified Saviour, whether *Jesus*, or *Son of God*, or *King of kings and Lord of lords*; but rather of that which is the meaning and use of all names, the summing up of a character, the presentation of a whole person, the revelation (in this case) of Christ Himself, in a manner before unknown, and still in its fulness incomprehensible by any save Himself, as that which He is, and as all that He is. Only He Himself, and they who are with Him and like Him in His glory, shall ever know that glorious, that complete revelation.

*And*² *clothed in a robe dyed with blood*: the well-known emblem of the great Conqueror in the 63rd chapter of the prophet Isaiah; *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? Their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment*³. *And His name is called THE WORD OF GOD*; the Revealer and Communicator of God. *In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God: and the Word was God*. He is now coming forth the second time on an errand of revelation: *the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him*; as before in *grace and truth*, so now in *justice and judgment*⁴. The Word of God has both offices, even as God Himself has both attributes. The Word of God is not only the offer of salvation: it is also *sharper than any two edged sword, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart*⁵.

¹ Rev. iii. 12.

² Verse 13.

³ Isai. lxiii. 1, 3.

⁴ John i. 1, 17, 18.

⁵ Heb. iv. 12.

And¹ the armies that are in the heaven, the saints of all time, now appearing with Christ in glory² in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God³, were following Him upon horses all white, clad in fine linen, white, pure. The armies of this passage are the bride of the former. Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him⁴.

And⁵ out of His mouth goes forth a sharp sword, that in (with) it He may smite the nations: and He Himself shall shepherd (rule) them in (with) a rod of iron: and He Himself—He by Himself; for alone is the corresponding expression of the 63rd chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, I have trodden the winepress alone⁶—treads the winepress of the wrath of the anger of God the Almighty. And⁷ He has upon His robe and upon His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

And⁸ I saw one (a certain) angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a great voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Hither, be ye gathered together to the great supper, or banquet, of God, that⁹ ye may eat flesh of kings, and flesh of commanders of thousands, and flesh of mighty men, and flesh of horses and of those who are seated upon them, and flesh of all, both free and bond men, and both small and great. And¹⁰ I saw the wild beast, and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to make (wage) the war with Him who is seated upon the

¹ Verse 14.

⁴ 1 Thes. iv. 14.

⁷ Verse 16.

² Col. iii. 4.

⁵ Verse 15.

⁸ Verse 17.

¹⁰ Verse 19.

³ Rom. viii. 19.

⁶ Isai. lxiii. 3.

⁹ Verse 18.

horse and with His army. And¹ the wild beast was seized, and the false prophet who was with him, who did the signs in his presence, the second wild beast of the 13th chapter², in (through) which he led astray those who had received the mark of the wild beast, and who were worshipping (worshippers of) his image: alive were they cast, the two, into the lake of fire which burns in (with) brimstone. And³ the rest were slain in (with) the sword of Him who is seated upon the horse, even with the sword which proceeded out of His mouth; and all the birds were filled out of (with) their flesh.

Babylon the great has fallen before this last scene opens. The Church in heaven, for the sake of the Church on earth, and yet more for the manifestation thus made of the power and justice of Almighty God, has rejoiced and given thanks over that portentous fall. The Babylon of St John's time, the Babylon to which this prophecy primarily refers, was the great Roman Empire. That application is too strongly marked to be evaded. And one of the chief uses of prophecy would have been lost if that application had not been thus clear and decisive. Prophecy is given to comfort the soul of the Church that is by the promise of deliverance from evils felt and realized. To promise the Church under Domitian deliverance from the yoke of the Papacy would have been to mock and not to console. Nevertheless prophecy, even where it has one direct object, has many indirect and collateral objects. Wherever the spirit of Babylon is, there the prophecy of its overthrow starts

¹ Verse 20.² Rev. xiii. 13.³ Verse 21.

again into vigour. And that which was not explained nor meant to be explained to St John, time has revealed to us; namely, that the fall of the Babylon that then was was not destined to be the immediate precursor of the end of all things. Even St John was instructed to write, *There are seven kings: five are fallen; and one is; and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space*¹. *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years*²; and that *short space* has been expanded by the event into a period of several centuries. Other Babylons, on a smaller scale, and with features less precisely marked, have come and gone since St John's prophecy against Rome was fulfilled. The beast still is, and still develops himself from time to time in new forms and shapes. Wherever he develops himself, there arises another Babylon; and of the ruin of that other Babylon the ruin of the first Babylon and of the second is an infallible and an ever-growing proof. Yet none the less on this account must we ascertain our own exact place in the chart of divine prediction. We are living, not in the time of the sixth, but in the time of the seventh head of the wild beast; that head which is known by its ten horns; that power which is designated by division, not by concentration; by a plurality, not by a unity, of crowns and thrones on earth. And here we read of the closing scene of the period of that seventh supremacy. It is the last of the empires: there is none to follow it. It is to terminate in that great outbreak of evil which

¹ Rev. xvii. 10.² 2 Pet. iii. 8.

under many different figures appears both in Old Testament and in New Testament prophecy as the sure token of the last end of all. *I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon*¹. And in this passage again: *I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.* And then upon this last concourse of the powers of evil bursts the full blaze of the divine glory in the person of Jesus Christ, unto conviction, consternation, and final ruin.

God forbid that we should lose ourselves in vague generalities, or speculate upon His revealed purposes towards the world without bringing the matter home to our individual hearts! I know that these scenes of battle and capture and conflagration are apt rather to dazzle than to edify. But *thus it is written*². Judge ye whether the words, or the thoughts suggested by them, are of man's invention or of God's disclosure. And if they be a part of God's Revelation, then must they have a use, sound, rational, instructive, quickening, as well as a possible misapprehension, misapplication, or abuse. And I believe that they are not revealed, not written, not

¹ Rev. xvi. 13, 14, 16.

² Luke xxiv. 46.

studied and pondered, in vain, if they convey to us, in tones of serious and solemn admonition, these two reflections with which I will close this discourse.

1. God has a purpose, an end, in view in all His dispensations; a purpose real and definite; an end which He will surely reach and realize.

2. God counts as an enemy of His Gospel and of His Son every man, high or low, rich or poor, who is not, by choice and will, in spirit and in life, embracing that Gospel, and serving that Saviour. *He that is not with me is against me*¹.

The form of that last outbreak of evil, the circumstances of that last discomfiture of evil, are still, even after the word of prophecy has spoken, amongst *the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God*². But of this be we well assured; that in the camp of evil, then as now, will be found the unbelieving, the profane, the hard-hearted, the immoral, the deceitful; that in that last conflict, as in the conflict ever waging, there will be no neutrals; the undecided for good is on the side of evil, and *the friend of the world is the enemy of God*³. *Who is on the Lord's side*⁴? for he and he only shall be able to stand when Christ appeareth⁵.

¹ Matt. xii. 30.

² Deut. xxix. 29.

³ James iv. 4.

⁴ Exod. xxxii. 26.

⁵ Mal. iii. 2.

LECTURE XXXIV.

REVELATION XX. 6.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

NEVER did we more need the help of God than in entering upon the interpretation of the chapter now before us. Your prayers, my brethren, will not be wanting, that we may be enabled *rightly to divide the word of truth*¹, and wisely and powerfully to apply it to the uses for which it was written.

And first let me read to you the word itself. Some fancies concerning it will be dissipated by laying the literal message full in view: we will then endeavour to open the windows wide above, that the bright light and the healthy air of inspiration may shine and breathe upon it.

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

And¹ I saw an angel descending out of the heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain laid on his hand. The abyss is that of which we read in the miracle of healing the demoniac, when the legion of evil spirits who had possessed him besought our Lord not to command them to go out into the deep². The deep there, the bottomless pit here, in both passages more exactly to be rendered the abyss, is the present home of the devil and his angels³; that from which they come forth on their errands of mischief and ruin, and to which they return from each as their assigned abode and prison-house.

And⁴ he, the Angel with the key and the chain, laid hold on the dragon, of whom we read so much in the 12th chapter; the ancient serpent, whose operations began so early in the human history, when it was the serpent who beguiled the woman to break God's command⁵; who is the devil, the slanderer or calumniator, and Satan, the adversary, of God and His saints; and⁶ bound him during a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and locked and sealed it above him, that he may not lead astray the nations any more, until the thousand years be finished: after these it is necessary, to fulfil the counsel of God, that he be loosed during a little time.

And⁷ I saw thrones, or seats; it is the word used in the 4th chapter for the seats or thrones on which the four and twenty elders sat around the seat or throne of God Himself; and some sat on them; who these were

¹ Verse 1.

² Luke viii. 31.

³ Matt. xxv. 41.

⁴ Verse 2.

⁵ Gen. iii. 13.

² Cor. xi. 3.

⁶ Verse 3.

⁷ Verse 4.

will be told instantly; *and judgment*, judicial power, *was given them*, given to those who sat on the seats: *and I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded*, slain with the axe, *because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God*; that is, for their fidelity to the testimony which they had to bear concerning Jesus, and to the word or message entrusted to them by God Himself; *and whosoever worshipped not on earth the wild beast, no nor his image, and received not the mark on to their forehead and on to their hand*; referring once again to the record of the latter part of the 13th chapter; *and they lived and reigned with Christ during a thousand years*. The¹ rest of the dead lived not; the word again is to be omitted; *until the thousand years be finished*. This is the first resurrection. Blessed² and holy is he who hath a share in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath not authority, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him during a thousand years.

And³ when the thousand years have been finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and⁴ shall come out to lead astray the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog; using a figurative designation of the nations of the world, found in the 38th and 39th chapters of the prophet Ezekiel; *to gather them together unto the war*, that final and fatal war of which we have already heard in the 16th and 19th chapters; *whose number is as the sand of the sea*. And⁵ they went up over the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp, or army, of

¹ Verse 5.² Verse 6.³ Verse 7.⁴ Verse 8.⁵ Verse 9.

the saints, and the beloved city; that city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem¹, which is the blessed company of all faithful people². And there descended fire out of the heaven, and devoured them. And³ the devil who was leading them astray, under whose fatal influence they were thus led to ruin, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the wild beast and the false prophet, the two wild beasts of the 13th chapter, the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth; and they shall be tormented by day and by night unto the ages of the ages.

And⁴ I saw a great white throne, and Him who was seated thereon, from whose face fled the earth and the heaven, and place was not found for them. And⁵ I saw the dead, the great and the small—high and low, rich and poor, one with another⁶—standing before (in presence of) the throne; and rolls were opened, records of reference and of remembrance⁷, and another roll was opened, which is that of life: and the dead were judged out of the things that had been written in the rolls, according to their works. And⁸ the sea gave, surrendered, the dead who were in it; and death and Hades, the place of departed souls, gave the dead who were in them; and they were judged each one according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And¹⁰ if any one was not found already written in the roll of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

¹ Heb. xii. 22.

² Communion Service.

³ Verse 10.

⁴ Verse 11.

⁵ Verse 12.

⁶ Psalm xlix. 2 (Prayer-Book Version).

⁷ Mal. iii. 16.

⁸ Verse 13.

⁹ Verse 14.

¹⁰ Verse 15.

Let us briefly gather up the chief points of the prophecy.

An Angel appears, descending from heaven, with a key and a chain in his hand. He seizes the first and greatest of the three enemies of God and man described in earlier pages of this Book, binds him with the chain, and then thrusts him into that dark and dismal abyss which has its upper and only opening on the surface of the earth of man. He closes the mouth of the pit, and sets a seal upon the covering. Thus is Satan debarred from his special work of deceiving and seducing the nations. But it is intimated that this imprisonment is not final. There is to be an interval, long but limited, of restrained and coerced power; at the end of which shall come a fresh outbreak, a renewed combat, and a decisive close.

Meanwhile another and a widely different scene presents itself. On an opposite side of the great stage of vision are seen seats set as for judgment, and upon them are seated in the company of Christ Himself the souls of the faithful and blessed dead. While Satan is in his prison, they are living and reigning with Christ. This is the first resurrection.

At length the thousand years are ended, and the last conflict, already under so many forms foretold, must rage and be decided. An outbreak unlike in its severity to any of the foregoing struggles and contests of the Church of Christ is to bring to a final issue the controversy of God with the apostate world. The nations are mustered to the encounter, and as you survey the oppo-

sing lines you would declare that there could be no doubt as to the issue. The one host is *as the sand upon the sea shore in multitude*¹: the other is a little remnant enclosed within *walls and bulwarks*², against which the tide of the sea-like myriads dashes and spends itself in vain endeavours. *God is in the midst of her: therefore she shall not be moved*³. At length the fire of God falls from heaven: at the moment of fancied triumph the hosts of evil are driven back, and are not; yea, the just anger of an outraged God lights upon them, and the deceiver himself is cast into that lake of fire and brimstone which has been *prepared for him*⁴ from the beginning.

Then I see a throne set, and from the face of Him who sits thereon earth and heaven flee away. I see the children of men gathered before that throne, an indiscriminate multitude, every distinction of rank and age cancelled; and this has become now the only, only question, Is the name of that one child of Adam written, or is it not written, in the book of life? According to the answer given to that one enquiry is the everlasting doom of each.

Nothing then hides or keeps back from judgment. The sea has in it many bodies of the sleeping; the grave has many: Hades has the souls of all. None shall withhold: none shall refuse to deliver its just tale of human deposits. Each answers to the summons of each: the record of judgment is coextensive with the record of

¹ Josh. xi. 4.

² Isai. xxvi. 1.

³ Psalm xlvi. 5.

⁴ Matt. xxv. 41.

creation: and the Creator Himself is also the Judge of man. The lake of fire is the second death; and in comparison with its blank and black despair the pains of a bodily dissolution sink into utter insignificance and nothingness.

Such is the general picture upon which our eyes are turned to-night. And now, my brethren, I must not evade a question which has occurred already to many of your minds, Does this passage speak of a first and a second resurrection in such sense that the resurrection itself—the resurrection, I mean, of the body—is cut into two distinct and distant parts; *the resurrection of the just*¹ taking place at the beginning of a period here designated as one of a thousand years in duration, and *the resurrection of condemnation*² taking place at its close? Are we to understand that prior to the close of this dispensation there will be a long reign of happiness and peace and godliness upon earth; the Lord Jesus Christ reigning below, with His raised and glorified saints, over an obedient and subjugated earth; and afterwards again a new rising and confederacy of human beings, under the instigation and chieftainship of Satan, against the visible throne of Christ and against the recognized ascendancy of His people? Is there to be this partial or at least temporary triumph of the Redeemer's kingdom before the final acknowledgment of its irresistible supremacy? Is there, once again, to be this conflict between men in *natural* and men in *spiritual bodies*;

¹ Luke xiv. 14.

² John v. 29.

between men still in flesh and men already *clad in incorruption*¹? Is the world of spirit to be thus brought into collision with the world of flesh? Is the work of good, when now it seemed to be accomplished, to be thus again assailed, imperilled, and *saved as by fire*²?

I will venture to say one thing: that if this be the doctrine of the passage before us it is a passage which stands alone in Scripture. Nowhere else do we read of two resurrections, two in time and in circumstances: nowhere else do we read of a prejudged judgment; a judgment (which is in other words a discrimination and a putting of differences) between two classes of men who have already been distinguished and dis severed not decisively alone but ostensibly, the one by having already reigned upon earth for a thousand years since resurrection, and the other by having been left in their graves a thousand years longer before resurrection.

But, my brethren, if any word of God holds a clear and unambiguous language upon a point of doctrine, we must accept it humbly and reverently even though it stood alone in the Bible. Even of discrepancies and contradictions between one passage and another we are poor and fallible judges. Not on this ground alone would I ask you to interpret any Scripture in this manner and not in that manner. Let us ask therefore whether in this chapter itself we have a plain and decisive testimony to the doctrine as it has been often stated by man. If it be so, then we must hold it in such sort of

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 44, 53.

² 1 Cor. iii. 15.

combination as we can with other and opposite revelations. If it be not so, then surely we ought to hesitate before we put such an interpretation upon words which may bear another and a more harmonious and consistent sense.

The first feature of this prophecy is the binding of Satan in the bottomless pit for a period of a thousand years. What have we elsewhere in Scripture to aid us in the interpretation of this figure?

On a hasty view we might imagine that nothing short of an absolute cessation of every evil influence could be denoted by an image so remarkable. If the tempter is under lock and key, the tempted, we might say, must be safe from molestation. And if such safety has never yet been exemplified below, we must date the prophecy at a time still future.

And yet, when we begin to compare Scripture with Scripture, we recall several expressions which cannot thus be dealt with. We remember how our Lord speaks, on the triumphant return of the seventy disciples, of *beholding Satan fall as lightning from heaven*¹. We remember how at a later time in His ministry, in the near prospect of His own sufferings and glory, He says, *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out*². We remember how, in His last discourse with the disciples on the night before He suffered, He says of the Holy Spirit whom He would send to them from the Father, *He shall reprove (convict)*

¹ Luke x. 18.

² John xii. 31.

the world of (concerning) judgment; shall prove to an unbelieving world the reality of a coming judgment, and rebuke them in their own conscience for their neglect and disregard of it, by this argument, *because the prince of this world is (has been) judged*¹. The redemption wrought out for mankind by the uplifted cross and by the opened grave of Jesus was the condemnation of the world and of its master. That redemption had in it not the promise only, not the foretaste only, but the power and the virtue of a judgment complete and final upon all evil. Evil might linger awhile after that redemption; but it would linger as a sentenced and forejudged thing. The devil might exist still, but it would be as a convict; in his condemned cell, which is *the abyss* here spoken of; waiting the striking of that hour which shall consign him to the executioner's sword. *God sending His own Son condemned sin in the flesh*²; passed upon it that sentence of extermination which is ever more nearly hastening to its execution. We remember how this very Book of Revelation has expressed in a similar figure the selfsame truth. When *the child of the woman was caught up unto God and to His throne*, there followed as it were *a war in heaven*, of which the issue was the ejection from it of the devil and his angels³. That was the effect of an accomplished redemption upon the position and the power of Satan. It was for him a very fall out of his heaven. He lighted upon the earth a humbled, degraded, maimed and mutilated being, carrying about

¹ John xvi. 8, 11.² Rom. viii. 3.³ Rev. xii. 5, 7—9.

with him the marks of a past defeat and the symptoms of a coming ruin. Nay, St Peter and St Jude do not hesitate to use the very figure here employed, with regard to the present state and home of the wicked one; the one appealing to this as an acknowledged proof of God's righteous judgment upon all sin, that He *spared not even angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment*¹; the other, St Jude, in like terms, saying, *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*². The expressions are not only parallel to those here before us, they are the same. The evil angels are already cast into the abyss, chained there in darkness until a day still future of absolute and final destruction, of casting into a lake of fire. The difference is only this; that the Book of Revelation adds a brief period of enlargement and activity as the last preliminary to that final judgment which all agree in distinguishing from the condition that is.

The duration of Satan's imprisonment is described as a period of a thousand years. I am not aware of any instance in which that particular duration is used in Scripture literally. We are all familiar with the phrases, *A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday*³. *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*⁴. The application of the expression is

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 4.

² Jude 6.

³ Psalm xc. 4.

⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 8.

always vague, not strict: it denotes a period protracted, prolonged, but indefinite. Even thus is it here. We should ill have entered into the language or spirit of the Apocalypse if we sought to tie down such a figure to a literal interpretation. If we have rightly understood the words now under consideration, the thousand years of Satan's detention denote the whole space between the completion of the work of man's Redemption by the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, and the arrival of that latest conflict, be it what it may, which will immediately herald the approach of His second Advent in glory.

We pause for a moment to press earnestly upon our hearts this one obvious reflection. If Satan is now bound; if redemption was Satan's death-warrant; if his home is now the abyss; if he is there in any sense chained; if he is there as a convict awaiting execution; how dreadful is it, and how wilful too, that we should any of us be still the slaves of this vanquished, convicted, sentenced being! How wanton must be the subjection in which men and women are still lying, by thousands and tens of thousands, to that power of evil which Christ not only will come again to judge, but did actually by His first coming sentence and condemn, yea, even as it is written, place under chain and lock and seal! And what an affront are we putting upon Christ crucified and risen, by doubting His power or doubting His will to deliver us, one by one, from that thrall and yoke of sin which as a whole He has once for all broken and

crushed ! Well may we seek some other interpretation, and fix some later day, for the binding here described, when we look into our own hearts and lives, and find Satan, for us at all events, so full of life, strength, and activity ! How different from this condition is that into which the work of Christ should have brought us ! He, it is written, took our flesh and blood, and *was made like unto us in all things, sin only except*¹, *that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*². Let us rise to the height of our high standing, as servants of the Victor, not as slaves of the vanquished !

When we have interpreted the thousand years of the time that is, we have settled by implication the meaning of the first resurrection and of the reign of the saints with Christ. These also must belong to the period that is now ; the period between our Lord's Ascension and His second Advent. You observe it is *the souls* that are spoken of, not the risen men : it is the condition of the blessed dead, not the condition of the blessed hereafter in heaven. At the opening of the fifth seal these same souls were seen *under the altar, crying, How long, O Lord ?* and then the *white robes* of priesthood *were given to each one of them*, and they were bidden to rest patiently *until their brethren also should be fulfilled*³. Here they are seen invested with those sacerdotal vestments, made *priests of God and of Christ*, and reigning also

¹ Art. xv.² Heb. ii. 14.³ Rev. vi. 9—11.

with Him for a thousand years. The period that is now is the period of the reign of Christ. *He must reign, till God hath put all enemies under His feet. When all things, death itself last of all, are finally subdued to Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject*; the mediatorial reign will have answered its glorious purpose; and *God Himself will thenceforth be all in all*¹. It is now that the word is receiving its accomplishment, *Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool*². It is in that reign that the souls of Christ's servants, as they successively pass into His presence, *departing to be with Christ, escaping from the body that they may be present with the Lord*³, are associated and incorporated with Him. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne*⁴. The first resurrection is that awakening from the death of the body to the life of the soul; that transition from a world of shadows into a world of realities; that passing from a state in which *we see by means of a glass darkly* into a state in which we shall see *face to face*, and *know even as we were known*⁵; which is the Christian's near future, even as the resurrection of the body and its transformation into the likeness of *Christ's glorious body*⁶ is the Christian's more remote but nobler and more satisfying prospect still. This is that resurrection of

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 25, 28.² Psalm cx. 1.³ Phil. i. 23. 2 Cor. v. 8.⁴ Rev. iii. 21.⁵ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.⁶ Phil. iii. 21.

which the wicked partake not: *the rest of the dead*, those who had not borne the testimony of Jesus, but had received in their forehead and on their hand the mark of that beast which is the world, *the rest of the dead lived not*, in that sense of life which is alone the Gospel's and the Christian's sense: *till the thousand years are finished* they exist only in that suffering of the lost soul which is separation from God and therefore also from life and from hope; and when they are finally reunited to the resurrection body, it will be for them not a *body of glory*¹, but a body of shame, of anguish, of torment; a body suited to that future life which is called more properly the second death; a state of unrest, of remorse, of despair, of companionship with all that is evil, of final severance from everything good or lovely or loving; a state of which well may it be written in the Book of God, *Good were it for the man finally condemned to it, if he had not been born, if he had never been born*²!

Of the last prelude to this twofold consummation, *the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation*³, we have often already spoken. One last effort as of an unchained convict; one last struggle of Satan loosed from his prison-house; one last and desperate enterprise of all the forces of evil gathered by every unclean spirit *to the battle of the great day of God Almighty*⁴—an enterprise at first apparently

¹ Phil. iii. 21.

² Mark xiv. 21.

³ John v. 29.

⁴ Rev. xvi. 14.

successful, the Euphrates itself dried for the passage of the confederate kings from the East against the Israel of God; the nations of all the earth *surrounding the camp of the saints and the beloved city*; in other words (as we understand it) a general rising of all that *have not the love of God in them*¹ to disprove and to ridicule and to undermine and to trample underfoot *the faith once delivered to the saints*²—this will be the sign of the Advent and of the completion of the age. Upon this gathering, this confederation of infidelity, of ungodliness, and of atheism, will burst the light of Christ's coming, and the devouring fire of God. Then the great white throne, the general resurrection, the final judgment. The dead, small and great, rise, and stand before God. The books are opened; many a book of death; many a long and overflowing page of the records of sin and ungodliness; histories of the paths by which souls have passed to ruin; deeds of darkness, long hidden, now flashing with terrible surprises upon the eye of the guilty man and of a beholding world: many books of death; one book of life. No element shall keep back one soul that has been ever brought into being from presenting itself at that scrutiny. *The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up the dead that were in them. And they were judged every man according to their works.*

Alas, my brethren, my beloved brethren, who shall

¹ John v. 42.

² Jude 3.

*live when God doeth this*¹? In that terrible scene each one of us will have to bear his part: what are we doing, how are we preparing for it? Are we taking refuge where alone it can be found, in Him who is now the Saviour, in Him who will then be the Judge? What a change, how fearful, how sudden, will that day bring with it for many! what revolutions of thought, what revulsions of feeling! May we have grace so to *expect* and so to *speed the coming of this day of God, that we may be found of it*, when it comes, *in peace, without spot, and blameless*!

¹ Num. xxiv. 23.

² 2 Pet. iii. 12, 14.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER,
April 28, 1862.

LECTURE XXXV.

REVELATION XXI. 5.

And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

At length we are in still waters. We have read of trials and judgments: we have read of foes and battles: we have read of sorrows of the righteous and triumphs of the ungodly. Shall there be no end of these things? no end of this state of imperfection, of warfare, of unrest? no end of these vicissitudes and alternations, of these inversions of right and wrong, of these perpetual renewals of a strife once decided? The very last chapter was of a somewhat saddening and disheartening character. It told us that even a condemned criminal differs from a criminal executed; that Satan in his prison-house can still tempt, and shall one day be loosed. It told us that redemption itself is not yet completed; that there are still years, perhaps centuries of years, to be accomplished, before the work of Christ will have taken its full effect,

before *the mystery of God*¹ is consummated, and before the opening of the book of life shall have brought in the final *manifestation of the sons of God*². Though the death and resurrection, the ascension and glory of the Son of Man, was the dethronement, the humiliation, the incarceration of the devil; though *the souls of the righteous, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh*, not only *are in joy and felicity*³, but are even *living and reigning with Christ*⁴ during the typical thousand years which intervene between His departure and His return, between the Ascension and the Advent; still the approach of the termination of that period shall be marked by new perils, by unexampled disasters, for the Church below; the devil himself will exert a power untried before; it shall be as though he had burst the bars of his dungeon, and had liberty to put forth all his strength and all his subtlety for one last, one crowning effort. The evil spirits of deception and seduction shall go forth in every direction to gather the nations of the earth to *the war of the great day of God Almighty*⁵. And but too successful shall be that Satanic mission. The face of the earth shall be darkened by the mustering legions: *the camp of the saints, the beloved city*⁶, shall be like a little fortress assailed by countless hosts; like a single rock in the midst of the ocean, against which the surging tide is raging with all its storms. But this conflict, if the sorest, is also the last of all. When it ends; when the intervention of

¹ Rev. x. 7.² Rom. viii. 19.³ Burial Service.⁴ Rev. xx. 4.⁵ Rev. xvi. 14.⁶ Rev. xx. 9.

God Himself, when the descent of Christ the Judge of man, brings it to its decisive close; when the fire from heaven falls, as it fell once on Carmel, to *consume* as it were *the wood and the stones and the dust* of the altar, and to *lick up the very water that was in the trench* around; then shall an assembled universe bow the knee in final subjection, saying, *The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God*¹. The controversy will be for ever ended: then, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God*². The *great white throne* is set for judgment. *The dead, small and great, stand before God. The book of life is opened. The dead are judged according to the things written. And whosoever is not found written in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire*³.

That which follows upon these things must of necessity be a revelation of the world to come. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*⁴ those things which lie beyond the last great judgment of mankind. And yet it is to these things, as revealed by God's Spirit to the beloved Apostle and Evangelist St John, that our thoughts are now to be directed. Henceforth, in the brief remainder of that course which has so long engaged us, we are to seek by God's grace to represent to ourselves, as He may enable us, that which He has seen fit to disclose to man of the secrets of the world beyond death, beyond resurrection, beyond judgment. The subject is attractive in no mean

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 38, 39.

³ Rev. xx. 11, 12, 15.

² Rom. xiv. 11.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

degree: God grant that it be an attraction not of the curiosity only but of the heart and of the spirit; an attraction put forth not by the dead page but by the Spirit who *wrote it for our learning*¹; an attraction, not to bright and beautiful scenes of fancy, but to the love and to the likeness of Him who fills that world, whose *glory* alone is *its light and its temple*²!

*And*³ *I saw a new heaven and a new earth.* The words are those of an earlier prophet. It is thus that Isaiah was instructed to describe *the consolation of Israel*⁴. *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind*⁵. And St Peter in his 2nd Epistle, writing of the Church's expectation, and describing the nature of that second deluge by which a sin-stained earth should be finally remade for perpetual habitation, states this as the result of all; *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*⁶. What an image of the deep pollution which sin has brought upon the things that are! It is as though not the earth only on which, but the sky also under which sin has revelled and displayed itself, must need obliteration and renewal before it can be fit for God's abode or for the saints' rest and glory. *I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth departed, and are not; we read in the last chapter that they had fled away*⁷ before Him who sat on the great throne; and

¹ Rom. xv. 4. ² Rev. xxi. 22, 23. ³ Verse 1. ⁴ Luke ii. 25.

⁵ Isai. lxxv. 17.

⁶ 2 Pet. iii. 13.

⁷ Rev. xx. 11.

the sea, that waste expanse, that divider and severer of nations, that instrument of a material and oftentimes an unrighteous and a cruel traffic, *the sea is not any longer*. The change from that which is is to be absolute and universal. Heaven, earth, and sea, as we look upon each, will each have been dissolved and recreated.

And¹ the holy city, a new Jerusalem, saw I descending out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The latter figure is again that of the prophet Isaiah. *He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels².* And so in the 45th Psalm. *The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework³.* The Bride is the Church; that *blessed company of all faithful people⁴* which Christ has brought into a nearness of union to Himself of which the ordinance of earthly marriage is a perpetual type and witness. That union is at present individually realized: it is by virtue of it that each several Christian *fights the good fight⁵* below, and at last *enters into rest⁶*. But as regards the Church collectively this union with Christ is one rather of espousal than of marriage. Not until the number of God's elect is accomplished, not until resurrection and judgment have finally manifested *who are His and who is holy⁷*, shall the presentation of

¹ Verse 2.

² Isai. lxi. 10.

³ Psalm xlv. 13, 14.

⁴ Communion Service.

⁵ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

⁶ Heb. iv. 3.

⁷ Num. xvi. 5.

the Bride to her Divine Lord be actually and completely solemnized. *Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it*; that is in the past: *that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*; that is in the present; that is the process through which we who are now alive upon earth, if we be Christ's at all, are severally passing: *that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish*¹; that is in the future; that is the consummation which we look for; that is what St John beheld in vision, when he saw *the holy city descending out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*. At present Jerusalem the holy city is above in heaven: St Paul says of it, *Jerusalem which is above is free*²; and when we are said already to have come to it—*ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*³—this is to express the true fellowship and communion which subsists already between Christians below and Christians departed, in their common spiritual union with Christ their Lord. But the city itself is at present in heaven. The witnesses of the 11th chapter, when *the spirit of life from God enters into them*, are seen to *ascend up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies behold them*⁴. Heaven is the Christian's city: his *conversation* (*citizenship*) *is in heaven*⁵: his kingdom is called *the kingdom of heaven*⁶. This is while his condition is one of tumult and

¹ Eph. v. 25—27.² Gal. iv. 26.³ Heb. xii. 22.⁴ Rev. xi. 11, 12.⁵ Phil. iii. 20.⁶ Matt. v. 3.

conflict, while safety is the one thing needful to him: so long he *looks up to heaven, and by faith beholds*¹ there a *city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*². But that glory which is at present veiled shall one day be revealed. That sonship which is already his by faith shall hereafter be manifested. That Jerusalem which is now above shall, when earth is purified for it and renovated, be seen, as St John saw it in his vision, coming down from God out of heaven. *Your life is hid with Christ in God: when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory*³.

*And*⁴ *I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men (mankind), and He will tabernacle with them, and they themselves shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them as their God.* Thus shall be fulfilled, in a sense beyond any in which the words were first spoken, that prophecy of God to His ancient people, *I will set my tabernacle among you; and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people*⁵. *The tabernacle, or tent, of the testimony in the wilderness*⁶ was the central sign of God's presence with Israel: the figure is still preserved even when the substance is come. *The tabernacle of God is with men* says in other words, God Himself will make His dwelling-place amongst you; you shall see Him; you shall talk with Him; *God Himself shall be with you, and be your God.*

¹ Collect for St Stephen's Day.

² Heb. xi. 10.

³ Col. iii. 3, 4.

⁴ Verse 3.

⁵ Lev. xxvi. 11, 12.

⁶ Num. ix. 15. Acts vii. 44.

And¹ He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall not be (exist) any longer; neither shall mourning nor crying nor pain be (exist) any longer; because the first (former) things departed. And² He who is seated upon the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new. And He saith, Write; record these revelations: for these words are faithful and true. And³ He said to me, They have come to pass, they are done; the words uttered, the things foretold, are accomplished: so certain are they that it is as though they were already seen fulfilled. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first letter and the last of the Greek alphabet, the beginning and the end. I am He who originated all things, and I am He who will consummate all things; the cause of all, and the upholder of all, and the end and aim of all; from whose will all things spring, and to whose glory all converge. Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things: to whom be glory for ever⁴. I to him that thirsteth will give out of the spring of the water of life freely, that is, gratuitously, as an unbought gift. Even as the prophet Isaiah wrote of old, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat, without money and without price⁵.

He⁶ that conquereth shall inherit these things; and I will be to him God, and he himself shall be to me a son. But⁷ for those who are cowardly, and unfaithful, and defiled with abominations, and murderers, and fornicators,

¹ Verse 4.² Verse 5.³ Verse 6.⁴ Rom. xi. 36.⁵ Isai. lv. 1.⁶ Verse 7.⁷ Verse 8.

and sorcerers, and idolaters, and for all the false, their share is in the lake which is kindled with fire and brimstone; which thing is the second death.

Upon the passage thus placed before us a few words of application will suggest themselves to all. They shall be given, in both their parts, as we read them in St Peter's 2nd Epistle.

1. *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless*¹.

For such things. What things? What is that which is here given as the description of the Christian's heaven; of his ultimate state, after resurrection, after the final judgment? Let your minds rest once again upon the several particulars. What will be gone then? What shall we be rid of, so many of us as shall *obtain that world*², which makes the present life always precarious, often sad, sometimes miserable?

(1) Pain is one of these things. How many of those who hear me know what pain is! Some of you have a life of pain. Not a day, not an hour, but you are conscious of some definite bodily discomfort, sometimes rising into anguish, but always present to you, whether roused or sleeping, as a sort of lion chained at your door, as a sort of *enemy in your habitation*³, for whom you can neither work securely nor sleep soundly. It is but a few persons, it is only the young, or the singularly strong and healthy, who can smile at the word pain, or profess igno-

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 14.

² Luke xx. 35.

³ 1 Sam. ii. 32.

rance of its power. Weariness itself is pain; unless it can lie down at once and sleep itself off. In the original language of this holy Book there is but one word to express toil and pain. I scarcely know which of the two was intended, when the words now under notice were written down. Excessive toil, too severe for the strength, too trying to the brain, not allowed to break off, not allowed to pause, not allowed to rest, is at once pain too. Many of us have known it. In that respect we are all of us working men. It is a great mistake to suppose that head-work is no labour, or may not be even pain. An overwrought brain is a suffering; yes, a torture and a torment. Then reflect upon the promise. Whosoever amongst you is a weary man, look up, look forward; there will be no weariness in heaven. And whosoever amongst you is an old man, beginning to feel *the very grasshopper a burden*¹, full of aches and pains if he do but stir from his chair and his fireside; remember there will be none of this in heaven. And whosoever amongst you is an ailing man or a feeble woman; never knowing what it is to enjoy a sense of vigour or robustness; never feeling equal to your day's work, and never refreshed by a sound night's repose; remember this will be all over for ever in heaven. And whosoever amongst you carries about with him or her the burden of some definite disease; something perhaps which is not only painful but unsightly also or repulsive or humiliating; like that poor woman in the Gospel who had borne long

¹ Eccles. xii. 5.

and suffered much, *had spent all her living upon physicians*¹, *and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse*², till at last in a happy hour she bethought herself of *touching the hem of a Saviour's garment*³—yes, each life as well as each *heart knows its own bitterness*, with which it allows not *the stranger to intermeddle*⁴—from this also there will be rest in heaven. Take heed to yourself, my brother, my sister, that you do not forfeit that rest; that you do not, as it is written, *come short of it*⁵, and so miss both worlds!

(2) Another of these things is sorrow. The mind has its pains: who has not known something of these? Yes, you are all carrying, I doubt not, this night your little separate burdens of sorrow: or if sorrow be too strong a word to express the troubles of some of us, at least I may speak of discomforts, of anxieties, of fears or cares, of drawbacks to perfect enjoyment, of interferences with the even tenor of a peaceful and happy life. One of you is sorrowing for a friend; one is anxious about the health in mind or body of a near and beloved relation; one is grieved and vexed with his own backslidings and sins; and one is tortured by doubts of acceptance, fearful of falling away finally, or (it may be) unable to grasp firmly the very realities of his Saviour's work or power or risen life in heaven. No one is happy while these things are so with him. And therefore I call upon all and upon each of these to gaze stedfastly

¹ Luke viii. 43.

² Mark v. 26.

³ Matt. ix. 20.

⁴ Prov. xiv. 10.

⁵ Heb. iv. 1.

upon the promise here written; In heaven *there shall be no more sorrow; God shall wipe away every tear.* You know well enough by past experience that this promise, if not true of heaven, if not true as God (we believe) makes it, will be verified nowhere else and in no other manner. You have seen enough on earth, whether your abode upon it has been long or short, to convince you that if any one were to offer you an exemption from sorrow here, he would be a deluder and a mocker: do you not feel that this gives God's Word a strong claim at least upon your consideration, when it declares solemnly that in the Christian's heaven there will be no sorrow, no crying, not a tear? Yes, it is in heaven, in the Christian heaven, in the Bible heaven, in God's heaven, alone if anywhere, that we can hope to be free from sorrow.

(3) And there is a third thing. There shall be no death there. In one way or another death is the cause of many of our sorrows below. Just when we were so happily placed, just when we had prepared our little nest and were so safely housed in it, just when the love of wife and child was so sweet to us and had done us so much good, had weaned us from self-indulgence and selfishness and centred all our thoughts in that which was so pure and so innocent and so improving; death came one night, and I rose in the morning a desolate and disconsolate man. And then again, without striking, he threatens; he comes near, hovers about, inspects as it were my doors and windows, never wholly departs, keeps me in perpetual flutter and unrest: and how can I know

peace while this is so? *Through fear of death*, it is written, men are *all their lifetime subject to bondage*¹. Do not tell me, sinful man, that thou hast no fear of death! Too selfish, it may be to fear for another, yet thou fearest, I can see it, for thyself. Thou art not ready for death; and yet death perhaps is almost ready for thee. Therefore, I would say it once again, if there be any place, any state, which is absolutely and for ever free from death—where, as it is written, death exists not—that surely is the place for thee: surely thou wilt listen to the promise, examine it well, and if it proves itself, close with it.

These are some of the things which will be absent, departed, gone and done with, in heaven. But it were a poor heaven if furnished only with negations; known only by what it has not; bare walls, empty spaces, vacant of what is unpleasing, but not filled with that which is good and blessed and glorious. Therefore we must go on to think of what there is. We shall hear more of it in that which follows. But have we not heard something, yes, the chief thing of all, to-night, when we were told that God Himself will be with the Christian in heaven, and be his God? *He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son*. I know indeed that some hearts in this congregation are saying as they listen, I am not ready for the sight of God: and others, I have nothing in common with the holy God: and

¹ Heb. ii. 15.

others, Let me not see God, *let not God speak with me, lest I die*¹. These are the first utterances of the natural, that is, the fallen Adam: while sin is cherished, I well know God cannot be desired, cannot be loved. But in itself, my brethren, is there not something sweet, something attractive, something sustaining in that promise, *I will be with thee, and will be thy God*? Yes, it is the distance from God, it is the not knowing Him, it is the having nothing definite to do with Him, which makes the thought formidable: if we felt sure that God was our God, that He loved us, that He cared for us, that He forgave us, that He had taken charge of us and was set upon comforting and blessing and saving us, we should cease to tremble then; we should say, Lord, *be it unto me according to Thy word*²! Lord, be my God, and let me, O let me be Thy son through Jesus Christ! To have God with us is to be perfectly safe: to have *God for our God*³ is to be perfectly happy.

Seeing then that ye look for such things, take heed that ye miss them not. This is the first charge.

2. *And the second is like unto it, namely this*⁴, also given in the words of the same 2nd Epistle of St Peter, *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness*⁵. The same passage which tells us something of what heaven

¹ Exod. xx. 19.

² Luke i. 38.

³ Psalm xlviii. 14.

⁴ Mark xii. 31.

⁵ 2 Pet. iii. 17.

will be to *him that overcometh* tells us also who will not be found there. *The fearful, and unbelieving; the abominable, and murderers; whoremongers, and sorcerers; idolaters, and all liars; these shall have their share in that other place, that lake burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* A fearful catalogue; and needing, it may be, some interpretation of its terms to bring it home to us who read. But let us think of one or two items of this description of the lost, and let us say within ourselves, From each one of these, *Good Lord, deliver me. The fearful.* The fearful are not those who fear God: not those who have *trembled* betimes *at His word*¹ and served Him on earth *with reverence and godly fear*². It is not an excess of reverence which is here spoken of. The fearful are the opposite of *him that overcometh*. They are those who have been cowardly in the face of God's enemy. Those who have never resisted manfully in the strife with sin. Those who could never rise to a bold confession, or bear opposition or ridicule rather than deny Christ or betray Him. Thus they are classed in the place of torment with *the unbelieving or unfaithful*. See what comes at last of this cowardice! See who are the associates then of those who once thought that, if not quite right, they were at least not far wrong! See them there surrounded by *murderers and whoremongers, by idolaters and all liars!* O terrible end! O fatal compromise carried on too

¹ Isai. lxvi. 2.² Heb. xii. 28.

long and too far with sinners and with sin! O spirit of oversensitiveness, of dislike to trouble, of dread of isolation, of inability to judge decisively and to act courageously, which has brought you, by slow stages, by easy descents, to a level so vile and a companionship so horrible! And now it must be so, be so for ever. There is no change there. *Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed*¹; and none are permitted to come or go between the heaven of the blessed and the hell of the lost.

Think of these things, my brethren, while yet there is time; time to cross over from the one state to the other; time to *cease to do evil*, time to *learn to do well*²; time to repent of sin, time to seek God, time to become in deed and in truth a new man in Christ Jesus. Let His own words, heard yet once more this evening, draw you by His grace towards Him; *I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely!* You know you are athirst: come then to Him, and drink!

¹ Luke xvi. 26.

² Isai. i. 16, 17.

LECTURE XXXVI.

REVELATION XXI. 22.

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

AND¹ *there came*, thus the passage opens, *one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of seven plagues the last of all, and talked with me, saying, Hither: I will show thee the woman, the bride of the Lamb.* In the 17th chapter the same ministry was employed to indicate to the Apostle a very different person, the guilty woman who is afterwards described as *Babylon the great, the mother of all the abominations of the earth.* It is again one of the Angels entrusted with the last vials of wrath who shows to St John that most opposite vision the description of which is now before us. The same Angels who are *sent forth by the Son of Man to gather out of His kingdom all things that offend*², are also employed to *gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*³.

¹ Verse 9.

² Matt. xiii. 41.

³ Matt. xxiv. 31.

And¹ he carried me away in spirit on to a mountain great and high, from whence a wide and commanding view might be obtained; and showed me the holy city Jerusalem descending out of the heaven, out of (originating from) God, having² the glory of God, enveloped in that splendour which betokened to Israel of old the light of God's presence: the luminary of her, the light which she gives—it is the word used in the Greek Bible in the 1st chapter of Genesis to denote the heavenly bodies which God set in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth³—is like a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone crystallizing, shining as crystal: she, the city, having⁴ a wall great and high; she, the city, having twelve gate-towers, and at the gate-towers twelve angels, as though to guard the city and to regulate its admissions; and names inscribed upon the gate-towers, which are names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. The heavenly Jerusalem shall be complete in all its component parts, even as the natural Israel had its twelve constituent tribes, each one essential to the perfect whole. From⁵ the sun-rising, that is, facing a person entering from the east, three gate-towers; and from the quarter of the northwind, on the north, three gate-towers; and from the quarter of the southwind, on the south, three gate-towers; and from the sunsetting, the west, three gate-towers. And⁶ there was the wall of the city having twelve foundations, twelve vast basement stones occupying each a twelfth part of the whole extent

¹ Verse 10.² Verse 11.³ Gen. i. 17.⁴ Verse 12.⁵ Verse 13.⁶ Verse 14.

of the city walls; *and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* We shall all be reminded of St Paul's description of the entire Church of Christ, as being *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone*¹; or of the words of our Lord when He said Himself to one of His Apostles, *I say unto thee that thou art Peter, the name denoting a rock, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*².

*And*³ *he who was talking with me had a measure, a golden reed, that he might measure the city and its gate-towers and its wall.* We read in the 11th chapter, though in a very different connection, of a similar measuring of the temple and the altar. And in both passages alike we are referred back to an earlier book of prophecy, the concluding chapters of the Prophet Ezekiel, where the captive Israelites are comforted in their dreary exile by a vision of a rebuilt city and temple, measured in every part with the minutest exactness, as an assurance that the promise was no vague or figurative one, but destined in God's counsels to a glorious realization. Even thus it is here.

*And*⁴ *the city lies foursquare, with four equal angles, and its length is as much as is also the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed up to furlongs of the number of twelve thousands.* The proportions of the city are of such magnitude as to forbid any attempt to localize or

¹ Eph. ii. 20.

² Matt. xvi. 18.

³ Verse 15.

⁴ Verse 16.

to realize. Each of the four sides of the city approaches to three hundred and fifty miles in length. And the description goes on to say that *the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal*. We may suppose that the city stands on a gigantic base of rock which is included in the measurement of its height. And¹ *he measured its wall of a hundred and forty-four cubits in height, man's measure, which is in this case angel's measure*. In reference to human things even an Angel must use human measurements.

And² *the building, that is, the material, of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like pure glass*. We are guarded at each step against attempting to realize the ideal. The one purpose is to express the glory of the heavenly state in figures altogether transcending human experience. The³ *foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was a jasper, the second a sapphire, the third a chalcedon, the fourth an emerald, the fifth⁴ a sardonyx, the sixth a sardian, the seventh a chrysolith, the eighth a beryl, the ninth a topaz, the tenth a chrysoprased, the eleventh a jacinth, the twelfth an amethyst*. And⁵ *the twelve gate-towers were twelve pearls: each one severally of the gate-towers was of one pearl*. And the street of the city was gold pure as transparent glass.

And⁶ *temple, or shrine, I saw not in it: for the Lord God the Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb*. And⁷ *the*

¹ Verse 17.

² Verse 18.

³ Verse 19.

⁴ Verse 20.

⁵ Verse 21.

⁶ Verse 22.

⁷ Verse 23.

city hath not need of the sun, nor of the moon, that they should shine for it: for the glory of God enlightened it, and the lamp of it is the Lamb. And¹ the nations shall walk by means of its light, and the kings of the earth carry their glory into it. It swallows up all other glories: they who enter it bring with them all their splendour to be eclipsed by and absorbed in its brightness: even the great men of the earth, its rulers and kings, if they enter there, enter but to cast their crowns before the throne²; enter but to walk in its light, and to see all other greatness grow pale and dim before it.

And³ its gate-towers shall not be closed by day: for night shall not be (exist) there. Its gates shall never be shut: if shut at all, they must be shut in daylight; for there shall be no night there: therefore they stand ever open, in the confidence of an entire safety, and for the constant influx of new tributes of glory. And⁴ men shall carry the glory and the honour of the nations into it. In it shall be fulfilled the words of the Prophet Isaiah, *Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces, or wealth, of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought*⁵.

And⁶ there shall not enter into it any common (unclean) thing, and (nor) he that maketh an abomination and a lie, except (but only) those who have been written in the roll of life of the Lamb. Evil will then have been put down throughout God's creation: the gates may stand open all

¹ Verse 24.

² Rev. iv. 10.

³ Verse 25.

⁴ Verse 26.

⁵ Isai. lx. 11.

⁶ Verse 27.

day long, for nothing unclean or abominable will be there to pass through them.

1. The first remark which suggests itself upon the passage thus read to you is as to what may be called the shape and size of the heavenly city. On earth we are always narrowing and excluding: it is as though Christians were afraid of being lost in a crowd: of being forgotten and overlooked in a multitude of redeemed and rescued souls. And therefore they make their own little systems, impose their own arbitrary conditions, and think the better of their sect or party in proportion as it admits fewer and excludes more. And even of those who do not make for themselves a new party or a new sect; even of those who are contented to worship in their fathers' Church, and are glad that its entrance should be wide and its comprehension ample; even of these how many are found viewing one another with suspicion and mistrust; unable to stretch out to the right and to the left the hand of fellowship, and to say, *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*¹.

Now let us seriously observe in this aspect the revelation here made to us of the heavenly state. The city is of vast dimensions. Its enclosing walls stretch themselves over some fifteen hundred miles. Its gates are always open. The glory and honour of the nations is ever pouring into it. Each tribe of Israel has its own gate, and each several gate is of one pearl. We read nothing there of watchwords of sects, or of banners of parties. *The city lieth foursquare: its length and its*

¹ Eph. vi. 24.

breadth and its height are equal. All is magnificent in scale, generous in terms, and bountiful in provision. Whoever would enter there must enter as the friend and the brother of all else. Schism and discord and variance are words unknown there among the followers of a common Lord and Master.

My brethren, I would solemnly charge it upon you that you practise betimes for that great and glorious commonwealth. If the Church below is split and divided, mourn over this, never glory in it. For yourselves, try your Christianity by this test amongst others, Is it a large and an ample and a generous system? Is it one which tends to promote brotherly concord and union? Is it one not self-made but *received of the Lord*¹ and stamped with the general acceptance of His believing people? Is it one of which the gates can ever stand open day and night; one of which it may be said with truth that it is world-wide in its offers and heaven-high in its aspirations? Be assured that the Gospel was sent *for the healing of the nations*²: and this end would be at once frustrated if the Gospel itself were framed upon narrow suppositions, or beset with repulsive peculiarities. How are the hearts of men consciously or unconsciously longing and yearning for a revelation grand and generous and elevating and wise! See that you be presenting that revelation in which you believe, as a satisfaction for this want! Never let it be said by candid, sensible, and noble-minded

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 23.

² Rev. xxii. 2.

men, I cannot receive that Gospel because it does not lie foursquare; because the length and the breadth and the height of it are not equal; because its gates are not open day and night; because the nations of them that believe can never walk in the light of it!

2. But there is a test of the true Gospel even more decisive than its amplitude: and that is the inherent holiness of its character. Can *anything that defileth, anything that worketh abomination or maketh a lie*, find rest, as such, within the borders of your Gospel? Is it a holy system? In your zeal for what you deem truth are you ever tempted to overlook or to leave out holiness? Are you careful so to state your Gospel as that it shall give no encouragement practically to carelessness? Are you more anxious to have *holy brethren*¹ in it than theological allies? It is a bad sign in the kingdom below when religious partisanship is allowed to take the place of spiritual holiness. Into the city above there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth: let not anything that defileth find acceptance or shelter in the city below! And if for others this cannot wholly be prevented; if wheat and tares must *grow together*² in God's harvest-field until the day of final severing; still let us as individuals look to ourselves: for ourselves we can tell, as we can seldom tell for others, whether we are walking in the light of sincerity and of godliness; whether there is anything harboured within us which is not of God but of

¹ Heb. iii. 1.

² Matt. xiii. 30.

God's enemy: and great need have we to try and judge ourselves concerning these things, lest perhaps in the day of *the manifestation of the sons of God*¹ we be found to *have neither part nor lot*² in the eternal *kingdom of Christ and of God*³.

3. The text itself will suggest one closing lesson of a profitable and important character. In the city above, it tells us, there will be no temple. We know what the significance of the temple was in the Jerusalem below. We know that it was the selected spot of God's abode upon earth; the place which He had Himself *chosen to set His name there*⁴. And we know that an Israelite excluded by fault or misfortune from the sacred precincts of the temple regarded himself as equally debarred from the worship and from the presence of his God. We know how mournful were the strains of sacred song in which king David bewailed his temporary expulsion from the shrine and sanctuary which he loved. *When I remember these things*, he wrote, as he pondered in the land beyond Jordan, during the unnatural rebellion of his son Absalom, the privileges from which he was an exile, *I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar*⁵. Exclusion from the tem-

¹ Rom. viii. 19.

² Acts viii. 21.

³ Eph. v. 5.

⁴ Neh. i. 9.

⁵ Psalm xlii. 4, 6.

ple was then exclusion from worship. *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God*¹. To be debarred from the courts of the Lord was to be exiled from the living God.

How strange then to Jewish ears must have been the announcement, *I saw no temple therein!* When Ezekiel was instructed to convey to the captive Israel a promise of comfort and of restoration, it consisted largely in a detailed description of the temple that was to be, with its ornaments and its ordinances, its chambers for the priests and its altars for the sacrifices. It was thus that reality was given to the hope of the nation and to the promises of its God. A city without a temple would have been to *Israel after the flesh*² rather a threat than a promise.

And how much must St John himself have had to learn and to unlearn before he could rejoice in this consummation of *the glory that should be revealed*³—*I saw no temple therein!* He too had shared doubtless to the full in the national feeling towards the shrine and sanctuary of Israel. It was only by slow and laborious steps that he had risen out of local and material notions of worship. He had heard his Master say on earth, and he was taught to record the words for the perpetual instruction of his Master's servants, *Believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the*

¹ Psalm lxxxiv. 2.² 1 Cor. x. 18.³ 1 Pet. v. 1.

*Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*¹. And it had become one of the first principles of the Christian faith that worship was no longer local but spiritual. *The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest*²?

But the secret of spiritual worship, and the assurance of its eternal character, are things more easily assented to in principle than realized in practice. Are there none of us, my brethren, even in this late day of the Church, who can ill enter into the glory of the revelation that in heaven there shall be no temple? It is an important and it is also a difficult duty to give its just place, and no more than its just place, to a building consecrated to Christian worship. Men are ever oscillating between the too much and the too little. Some speak of a church in terms borrowed from the temple; think that the place itself adds something to the sanctity of worship; believe that prayers offered in a consecrated building have a virtue, and that the worshippers in a consecrated building have an acceptance, or at least a nearness of access, which they could not possess out of it. And

¹ John iv. 21, 23, 24.

² Acts vii. 48, 49.

the effect of this is far more to disparage devotion elsewhere than to enhance it here. We know indeed that a very peculiar blessing rests upon united worship; that our Lord Himself has promised to it His special presence; that He has encouraged by the utmost strength of expression the expectation of an answer from above to the combined and united prayers of His people. We cannot estimate too highly the value and the blessedness of congregational devotion. But we must always be careful to distinguish between the Jewish and the Christian aspect of the place of such worship. It is well that the house of prayer should be seemly, should be convenient, should be beautiful: we can thank God if He has given us, as in this parish, a magnificent sanctuary: we see no merit, but the very contrary, in leaving the place of divine worship mean and contemptible, while every treasure of art is lavished upon the improvement and adornment of private dwellings. But we find in all this an added reason for remembering and not mistaking the Christian meaning of the word Church or temple. We know that the Church now is not wood and stone, not costly materials or beautiful architecture, but the company of believing souls in which, as in a body, the Holy Spirit of God has His earthly dwelling. And we know that the temple now is not a structure of gold and cedar-wood, equipped with altars of incense and of burnt-offering, with its most holy place within the veil barred against human step or human sight; but that mystical body of Christ, of which

every believer in Christ is a member, which in its completeness is the habitation of God, *the place where His honour dwelleth*¹, and within which *the sacrifice of praise*² and thanksgiving is perpetually offered before Him. It is not the building which is God's Church, but the congregation of living souls which meet in it for worship.

And certainly it is of no slight moment that we should all lay to heart in this connection the revelation recorded in the text, In the heavenly city *I saw no temple*. How anxious becomes the enquiry for each one of us, What will become of my worship then? Am I so preparing for and so practising a worship entirely spiritual, that when I enter the eternal world I shall be ready to dispense altogether with a temple? At present God, in His great condescension to the weakness of our faith and the earthliness of our vision, allows us the help of the senses even where He cautions us against resting in it. He grants us at present the aid which we all derive from places and ministers and ordinances of worship. But He tells us that these things will one day be withdrawn: He tells us that even now these things must not be trusted in: He tells us that, as He is Himself Spirit, so the only devotion which is acceptable to Him is the devotion of the spirit and of the heart.

But is the Christian then, whether on earth or in heaven, without his temple? Does he offer his wor-

¹ Psalm xxvi. 8.

² Heb. xiii. 15.

ship as it were in the open field, without house or shelter? Let the last words of the text answer that question. *The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.* The reason why there is no other temple is that no other is needed. The worship of heaven is offered directly, not only to God, but in God. It is as if God Himself were the shrine in which man will then adore Him. How magnificent a figure! how sublime a hope! The blessed will be so included in God that even when they worship He will be their temple. He, the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb. My brethren, what know we as yet of any approach to such a worship? It is as much as we can do to believe that our prayer ever reaches God; that it is not utterly *spoken into the air*¹; that it does not fall back idly upon the earth from which it is offered. But as to praying in God as well as to God, as to what St Jude calls *praying in the Holy Ghost*², what do we know of it? How many of the prayers offered in this house to-day have been offered in God as well as to God? Where God is, the world is not, and folly is not, and vain trifling idle thought is not, and sin is not: he who worships in God worships apart from all these things; his very soul rising into a world of spirit, of reality and truth, not of shadow and semblance, above; his very life absorbed for the time in that life of Christ Himself which is centred and *hidden* and lost in

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 9.² Jude 20.

God¹. Which of us knows anything of such prayer? Nay, which of us knows anything of that life itself, of which such prayer is at once the food and the expression?

I fear, my brethren, the change from earth to heaven will be too great, too sudden, too abrupt, for almost any of us! We trust that all will be done for us by that unknown, that unrealized event, to which we give the name of death. Let us be assured that, whatever else death may do or not do for us, it will carry no man for the first time across the boundary-line between ruin and salvation, it will enable no man to *pass from eternal death to eternal life*². If we would hereafter worship in that temple which is God Himself, Christ Himself, we must *know God now by faith*³, we must have life now in Christ; and then the words may be verified to us, *I will see you myself, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you*⁴.

¹ Col. iii. 3.

² John v. 24.

³ Collect for the Epiphany.

⁴ John xvi. 22.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER,
May 11, 1862.

LECTURE XXXVII.

REVELATION XXII. 2.

And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

WE believe that we are reading now of heaven. After all its conflicts and sorrows the Church of Christ has at last *entered into peace*¹. All the sayings of God have now been accomplished: resurrection, the twofold resurrection, *the resurrection of life* and *the resurrection of condemnation*²; judgment, the last, the universal judgment, with its twofold and but twofold result: and there has come in that new scene, every feature of which is unlike the present, whether it be in point of holiness or of happiness, of the absence of evil or of the presence of good.

The first five verses of this last chapter of the Bible are our subject this evening. May God give us grace so to enter into their sense and force, that we may find

¹ Isai. lvii. 2.

² John v. 29.

in them not only a resistless argument for this day's work of charity, but also a constraining motive for a life of consistency and of devotion !

*And¹ he, that holy Angel who was employed as the messenger and interpreter of this vision, showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, going forth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. He had already shown the city itself descending, with its walls and gate-towers, its twelve vast foundation-stones, its street of transparent gold, its light the glory of God, its only temple God and the Lamb. And now he points out that further element of its blessedness which is typified by a river, clear as crystal, of the water of life. We all know by description, none of us perhaps knows by experience, what water is in eastern deserts or under eastern suns. We all know that our Lord himself when He was upon earth consecrated the element of water to denote the promise of His Holy Spirit; as when He said, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink². If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life³. This spake He,* the Evangelist adds, after recording a similar prediction in another chapter, *of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive⁴. The water of life is the Holy Spirit of God. It proceeds out of the throne, the one**

¹ Verse 1.

² John vii. 37.

³ John iv. 10, 14.

⁴ John vii. 39.

throne, of God and of the Lamb; even as it is written, *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name*¹. *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me*².

Life is the knowledge of God, access to God, union with God. *This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent*³. The Holy Spirit is the giver of this life: He, coming into the soul, reunites it to God; opens the closed door, and admits the alien and the exile into communication and communion with God in Christ the source of life.

This life must begin below, or it can never be perfected above. The Holy Spirit is the earnest, the foretaste, the firstfruits, of the eternal life of heaven. But that which is here vouchsafed as it were in the drops of a refreshing shower, or in the moisture of the early dew upon the parched and withering grass, will then be enjoyed at the fountain-head and in the full-flowing stream. *Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures*⁴. Just as in the paradise of the first creation *a river went out of Eden to water the garden*⁵; and just as in the visions of the prophet Ezekiel one main feature of the predicted restoration was the *issuing of waters from under the threshold of the house*, that is, of the temple, eastward, which rose and rose until they

¹ John xiv. 26.² John xv. 26.³ John xvii. 3.⁴ Psalm xxxvi. 8.⁵ Gen. ii. 10.

were a river that could not be passed over, and of which it is said that *everything shall live whither the river cometh*¹; even thus shall it be in the heavenly city: he showed me a pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. They who shall obtain that world² shall receive of the Spirit not by measure³. The cheering and cleansing and healing waters shall flow in their very sight, and they shall drink of them in their sparkling clearness and in their rich abundance.

There shall be other features also of the forfeited paradise in the paradise regained. In⁴ the midst of its street, of the street of the city, and of the river hence and thence, on this side and on that—in other words, on each side of the river which divides the street—is a tree of life, making (yielding) twelve fruits of various kind; according to each month, month by month all the year long, rendering its fruit: and the leaves of the tree are unto healing of the nations. The river flows through the street of the city, and the tree of life stands on each side of its stream. In Eden the tree of life stood in the midst of the garden⁵: and when man had sinned, he was driven out for this special reason, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever⁶. In the vision of Ezekiel, already so often referred to, the image is more general. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new

¹ Ezek. xlvii. 1, 5, 9. ² Luke xx. 35. ³ John iii. 34.

⁴ Verse 2.

⁵ Gen. ii. 9.

⁶ Gen. iii. 22.

*fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine*¹. The vision of St John combines the two. There is *the tree of life* of the original paradise; but so multiplied that it stands on either side along the river; so fruitful that it bears every month; so versatile that its produce is of twelve sorts, applicable to every want and taste; and so accessible that, instead of being protected by *a flaming sword to keep man from the way of the tree of life*², it stands in the very street, and whosoever will may freely pluck its fruit. Thus is every want of the inhabitants of the heavenly city provided for. For thirst there is the river of life; for hunger there is the fruit of the tree of life: and not the fruit only, the very leaves of the tree have a use; they are, as Ezekiel expresses it, *for medicine; the very leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations*.

*And*³ *every accursed thing shall not be (exist) any longer*. The words are from the prophet Zechariah. *And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction*—the Greek Bible gives it, *there shall be no more curse, or accursed thing—but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited*⁴. Nothing upon which God's displeasure rests shall exist any longer in that *new heaven and new earth*⁵. While evil still mixes itself with good, God cannot place His throne among men. But then, when no accursed thing exists any more, the words will be fulfilled, *And*

¹ Ezek. xlvii. 12.² Gen. iii. 24.³ Verse 3.⁴ Zech. xiv. 11.⁵ Rev. xxi. 1.

the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, in the city; and His servants shall serve Him—serve Him as His priests is the full force of the expression—so that the words of the prophet Malachi will be fulfilled, *He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness*¹. *And*² *they shall see His countenance, and His name shall be on their foreheads*. There shall be no mistake then as to whose they are: their very brow will bear their Master's name, and the service which they render shall be rendered in His presence, in the very light of His countenance. *And*³ *night shall not be (exist)*; gloom and darkness shall be unknown in that happy and glorious world: *and there is not need of lamp and of light*, no need of artificial and no need of natural light, *because the Lord (Jehovah) who is God shall give light upon them*, shall pour His light over them, *and they shall reign unto the ages of the ages*. *He hath made them priests and kings*⁴.

Every clause in this passage might furnish materials for a sermon. *The water of life. The tree of life. No more curse. No night there. They shall see His face. They shall reign for ever and ever.* But I will select just two points for brief notice; the one as a suggestion of Christian hope, the other as a call to Christian duty.

1. *His servants shall serve Him.*

It is the complaint of many Christian persons, I doubt not, in this congregation, that they are *sore let and hindered* by sin *in running the race that is set before them*⁵.

¹ Mal. iii. 3.

² Verse 4.

³ Verse 5.

⁴ Rev. i. 6.

⁵ Collect for 4th Sunday in Advent.

What is each day but a series of disappointments and of defeats? How painful is the contrast for each one of us between his morning prayer and his prayer at evening! Every book of private or family devotion is framed on that supposition. In the morning we are taught to ask for grace: in the evening we are taught to confess sin. It is the recognized condition of a Christian man in this world that even his prayers for God's help are (through his own fault) not fully answered. *Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin*¹. *Defend us through this day with Thy mighty power, that we may fall into no sin...but that all our doings may be ordered by Thy governance, to do always that is righteous in Thy sight*². Such is the petition, such the aspiration, with which the day's course is opened. But who does not need, who is not taught, to confess at evening that that prayer and that hope have been imperfectly granted and fulfilled? A thousand things have arisen during those twelve hours which we looked not for; and each one has made a demand upon our strength and courage to which we were unequal. We did hope that this day at all events that old snare would have been spread for us in vain; that that evil temper, sinful imagination, or hurtful desire, of which we have so often experienced the folly and the misery and the wickedness, had been so guarded against by resolution and by supplication that it could not this day have prevailed against us. And yet no sooner did it utter its faintest whisper within than we listened to it and yielded

¹ Litany.² 3rd Collect at Morning Prayer.

and fell before it. The very security which we felt against it ; felt, as we hoped, not in ourselves but in the help of God ; gave it the easier entrance and the readier success. These things are the sad testimony of all Christian men and Christian women. Those who have aimed at a condition of perfection, those who said that God's grace ought to give and might be expected to give an immediate and entire release from the chains of original and actual sin, have only too often *added sin to sin*¹, by both continuing blind and yet saying, *We see*². For a time they have confused together what ought to be and what is ; sought to reconcile the doctrine of perfectibility with the experience of corruption, even at the risk of *calling evil good and good evil*³ : and they have ended (how could it be otherwise ?) either in a condition of self-satisfaction, self-righteousness, and therefore self-deception ; or else in one of utter disappointment, perhaps even of absolute despair and apostasy from the faith. And yet, on the other hand, these persons were right in protesting against the easiness of that acquiescence in defeat which is too characteristic of the Gospel of our times. It was right that they should say, and *affirm* it earnestly and *constantly*⁴, *Jesus Christ is not the minister of carelessness, of unrighteousness, and sin*⁵. Jesus Christ came not to *save His people* in their sins but *from their sins*⁶. It were a poor Gospel, one scarcely worthy of being ratified by the blood of a Saviour, which would tell us, God has forgiven ; but which cannot add, God

¹ Isai. xxx. 1.² John ix. 41.³ Isai. v. 20.⁴ Titus iii. 8.⁵ Gal. ii. 17.⁶ Matt. i. 21.

can strengthen and God will cleanse. There must be a fault somewhere, in the receiver or else in the thing received, if there be not a deliverance from sin, gradual yet real, accompanying the deliverance from guilt, from condemnation, and from punishment. And it needs indeed no little wisdom, in stating God's truth to others, and in using it for ourselves, so to preach forgiveness as not to obscure holiness, and so to enforce holiness as not to exclude mercy. Great need have we all to use that wise petition of our Church in its office for the Visitation of the Sick, *Give us a right understanding of ourselves, and of Thy threats and promises, that we may neither cast away our confidence in Thee, nor place it anywhere but in Thee.*

But where is the man, however watchful over himself, however victorious through faith and grace in the Christian warfare, who has not cause to listen with exceeding comfort to the promise here written. In heaven God's *servants shall serve Him*? serve Him, that is, as they never served on earth; even with that completeness of devotion, that constancy of resolution, and that unweariedness of zeal, which belongs only to Angels who never sinned and to *just men at length made perfect*¹. *Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth*², is a prayer never fully to be answered until *the first heaven and the first earth shall have passed away*³, and the world that is shall have been replaced by another, *wherein* for the first time *dwelleth righteousness*⁴.

God grant that what has been said may lead no man

¹ Heb. xii. 23.

² Luke xi. 2.

³ Rev. xxi. 1.

⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 13.

to acquiesce in a condition of torpid faith or of low attainment! Remember always, brethren, and forget not, they who serve not on earth will never serve in heaven. Not for the encouragement of sloth or languor or carelessness are the words written, but rather for the quickening of hope and the enlivening of devotion. If there be before us a time when imperfection shall be a thing of the past, and when *mortality* itself *shall be swallowed up of life*¹, how ought we to try ourselves as to the reality of that faith and that grace which alone are destined to so glorious a consummation! If in heaven we *shall see God*, we must take heed here that we become *pure in heart*². If in heaven we shall be enabled to serve Him with an entire love and a perfect self-devotion, we must see that here below we know something of the beginning of that love and that devotion; know what it is to take delight in worship, and to find ourselves strengthened by it for a more vigorous and a more earnest service.

2. The words of the text, and the occasion on which we are assembled³, point not more to hope than to duty. We read in the passage before us, with reference to that tree of life which not only grows freely but admits of an unrestricted access in the heavenly city, that as its fruit is for food, so its leaves, as Ezekiel also writes, are *for medicine; the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations*. We will not enter into any questions, more curious than profitable, whether perhaps there may exist

¹ 2 Cor. v. 4.

² Matt. v. 8.

³ A Collection was made after this Sermon in aid of Missions.

even then nations and races to which the inhabitants of the heavenly city shall be sent to minister salvation; whether one part of the blessed and glorious occupation of the saved in that world beyond death, beyond resurrection, beyond judgment, may perhaps be the communication of the knowledge of God to kingdoms and peoples outside the range of the experience of the world that is. These things we know not. And certainly in the mere mention of them as possibilities we must ever be careful to guard against such an abuse of the words, as might apply them to a sort of third or middle state, in which persons who have here heard of Christ and not profited by the hearing might be imagined to exist hereafter as though between hell and heaven. We know from the certain word of God that our one opportunity of securing salvation is in the time that is. If we will not accept Christ and love and serve Him now, we are expressly told that that refusal or that neglect, persisted in till death, will be to us absolutely and finally fatal. I say therefore that if there be such a thing as a healing by the leaves of the tree of life to be ministered hereafter by the inhabitants of the glorious city, it must be a ministration to nations and races lying beyond the reach of the Gospel now, yea, beyond the confines of that world to which *the Gospel of the kingdom* must have been first preached before the promised *end shall come*¹.

And therefore speaking, as alone we ought to be willing to speak, practically, and with God's sure word

¹ Matt. xxiv. 14.

of Revelation as our guide, we must understand the healing here spoken of in one of two senses: either as belonging to those who are already safe and at rest, or as taking place not then but now, not after but before the last end of all things. They who have been *accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead*¹ will reach it *hardly bestead and hungry*². Like one of the kings of Israel of old, they will have need to rest awhile in the city, *to be healed of the wounds which the Syrians had given them*³. The conflicts of earth will have been many, and the scars of those conflicts will have been carried with them to the grave. Not until they have entered the heavenly city, have bathed themselves in its stream, and eaten of the reviving fruit of its tree of life, will they recover themselves for future service. Surely for them the leaves of the tree of life may well be for healing. If the stores of the Word of God were medicinal as well as strengthening below; if out of them we were taught to pray that *the diseases of our souls might be healed as by wholesome medicines*⁴; even so then may the hurts and wounds of a war-worn race be soothed and comforted by those *leaves of the tree of life which are for the healing of the nations*.

But in any other sense than this the time for healing must be the life that is. If we are not healed now, if the nations of the living are not healed now in this present world by the leaves of the tree of life, no such heal-

¹ Luke xx. 35.

² Isai. viii. 21.

³ 2 Kings viii. 28.

⁴ Collect for St Luke's Day.

ing can be for us or for them in the world of resurrection and of eternity. The matter is urgent and instant, if it be true. *The leaves of the tree are now for the healing of the nations.*

And need I prove to any one that there are diseases amongst the nations which need this one and this only healing? We need not look far for that proof. Alas! our own nation—alas! that little sample of our own nation which our own town furnishes—is full of such diseases. And if civilization can do something, and if science can do something, and if humanity and charity can do something to remedy these things locally and partially, yet how ineffectual is the attempt on a wide scale, and how shallow the result even on a narrow scale! Nor must we forget that even that civilization, and still more that humanity and that charity, which thus busies itself, comes ultimately from the same source; they are themselves, if not leaves of the tree of life, yet consequences of the application of those leaves in some quarter or other for healing. The Gospel is often forgotten by us, unthankfully forgotten, in its remoter consequences. We read by the light of our lamp, and we forget that it was the sun at whose fountainhead that lamp was originally kindled.

And, my brethren, if even our own country, if even our own town, shows us hideous forms of fatal disease requiring a divine remedy; if we feel that nothing would entirely and perfectly cure any one of those diseases but the reception into individual hearts of the true and pure Gospel of the grace of God; if

we feel that until that agency is applied little can be done for the lives, and nothing at all for the suffering and dying souls of men; can we not without other knowledge extend our view, as we are bidden to do this evening, and think how it must be with nations in which there is not as yet even the reflection of Gospel light, not even its civilizing or humanizing influences, to diminish the blackness of that shadow of death in which God's creation is lying?

Think upon that condition in three aspects. Alas! there is not one in which we cannot picture it without crossing a sea or traversing a desert.

(1) Think of the superstitions of men apart from the Gospel. Those horrible and revolting forms to which men *made in God's image*¹ offer the worship of a grovelling and cowardly deprecation. How they deify mere power, and pray that power not to be malign towards them. How they *change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image of corruptible man*; yea, of worse things than that, *of birds and beasts and creeping things*²; yea, of worse things yet than these, of representations of human passions and of wicked destructive lusts. Picture to yourselves your own knee bending to such forms; images of things from which you pray that your very dreams may be free; from which you pray that you may be delivered even in the shape of phantoms and nightmares of your delirium. There are whole nations in that state; bowing down to demons and devils like those: do not they

¹ Gen. i. 26.

² Rom. i. 23.

need the leaves of that tree which is for the healing of the nations?

(2) Think of the cruelties of men apart from the Gospel. Are not in deed *the dark places of the earth*, as the Psalmist writes, *full of the habitations of cruelty*¹? Where, save in Gospel lands, does the idea of humanity, of philanthropy, linger? If even here, even amongst us, dark deeds of barbarity are still practised, you know that it is in spite of the Gospel; you know that the very law of the land exercises a controlling, yea a repressive and coercive and punitive power over them. Even here they cannot in this world be eradicated: even here murders, and violences yet worse than murder, are done in *the chambers of men's imagery*² and in the *lurking dens* of human crime³. How is it where such things are not even forbidden, not even discountenanced, not even driven into hiding-places, not even afraid to parade themselves in the light? Judge ye, my brethren, judge ye, whether the leaves of the divine tree are not needed in this respect for the healing of the nations.

(3) And what shall I say of the lusts of men? Nay, it becomes us not here to speak of *things which are done of them in secret*⁴ where Christ is not named, where His holy law is a thing unknown. You know well enough what it is which keeps these things from being riotous and rampant amongst us: you know that but for the authority of Christ, and but for the human law

¹ Psalm lxxiv. 20.

² Ezek. viii. 12.

³ Psalm x. 8 (Prayer-Book Version).

⁴ Eph. v. 12.

which respects and re-echoes the authority of Christ, we should be yet worse than we are ; yet more presumptuous, defiant, and demonstrative in evil : and again therefore I say, if we imagine the word of Christ and the yoke of Christ withdrawn from any people, we can tell for ourselves what they are likely to be, what they must be, what fallen human nature must be under its own guidance : and can any heart in this congregation wonder if it is asked to aid in imposing that salutary yoke, in stretching forth for the healing of the nations the leaves of the tree of life ?

Now that is the work to which you are called, invited, bidden, this night. It is not much to which we summon you. There are those in this congregation who have surrendered their nearest and dearest earthly treasures to the work of carrying these leaves of the divine medicine. How small a thing must these feel it to be to be asked tonight only to give money ! They who have allowed sons and daughters to go forth *they knew not whither*¹ in the name of Christ and in the grace of His Cross, if they might but win to Him a soul or two from among the heathen ; they who have made this sacrifice and called it an honour even while the heart bled in making it ; what can they think of the task imposed tonight upon the worshippers ? Yet they will not depreciate the work of those on whom the smallest part of this glorious office has fallen. They who remain at home, enjoy the domestic blessings

¹ Heb. xi. 8.

which God has given, and frequent the worship of God their Saviour in a beautiful earthly temple whither they can *go with the multitude, with the voice of joy and praise*¹, to hear of Christ, to pray to Him, and to tell His glory; even they can do something for Him: they can aid those who are gone forth by sympathy and by intercession: they can provide that material offering without which the spiritual sacrifice can scarcely be made availing: they can stand as it were on the shore of the mighty ocean to cheer by voice and sign those who are buffeting with its tides and storms: they can stand as it were on the watch-tower which overlooks the field of combat, and bid God speed, with prayer to the God of battles, to those who have *taken to them His whole armour*², and are wrestling hand to hand with the manifested forms of evil. That is our work tonight: let us not be wanting to it!

¹ Psalm xlii. 4.

² Eph. vi. 13.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER,
May 18, 1862.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

REVELATION XXII. II.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

*THEY*¹ *shall reign for ever and ever.* With that emphatic sentence the predictions of this last Book of Holy Scripture are brought to a final close. There remains only a sort of enforcement and application of the whole, comprised in the sixteen verses which are yet left us for consideration, and then our difficult and responsible task will be ended; of which may God forgive the errors and the deficiencies, and bless to the furtherance of His work amongst us whatever may have been rightly spoken!

*And*² *he, the Angel of the 21st chapter, said to me, These words are faithful and true; they are trustworthy,*

¹ Rev. xxii. 5.

² Verse 6.

they may be relied upon; and they are agreeable to truth, consistent with the very thing that is: *and the Lord, God Himself, the God of the spirits of the prophets*, He from whose inspiration the prophets present and past have received the impulse which moves and the light which guides them, *sent His angel to show to His servants things which must become (come to pass) quickly*; things of urgent importance, inasmuch as their fulfilment is not only certain, but in the sight of Him *with whom a thousand years are as one day*¹ near and instant too.

*And*² *behold, I am coming quickly*. One greater than the Angel here speaks Himself. *Blessed is he who keepeth the words of the prophecy of this roll*. A special blessing is pronounced by our Lord Jesus Christ upon those who prize, and keep as a precious and sacred deposit, this particular portion of His revealed truth. Which of us has done so? Which of us has not rather regarded it as a mystical, unintelligible, and therefore unprofitable book?

*And*³ *I John am he who heareth and seeth*, am the hearer and seer of, *these things*. He who when relating the facts of the Gospel history and the discourses of his Divine Lord ever suppressed and withheld his name, speaking of himself as *another disciple, that other disciple*⁴, or *the disciple whom Jesus loved*⁵, now gives to his work the authority of his name, and attests by a solemn assertion the reality of the revelation. It was not a mere allegory, a mere meditation, a mere dissertation of his

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 8.² Verse 7.³ Verse 8.⁴ John xviii. 15, 16.⁵ John xiii. 23.

own concerning divine things. It was not a mere digest of earlier prophecies, with such applications and interpretations as his own opinion or his own study might have suggested. It was in the strictest sense the record of things *seen and heard*¹; seen in *visions of God*², heard from the voice of Angels or of One who is greater still than they. So that of this, as of his other inspired writings, St John might still say, *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you*³.

And when I heard and when I saw, when I had thus ended my seeing and hearing, *I fell to worship before the feet of the angel who was showing me*, who was the indicator to me of, *these things*. It is the repetition of an earlier record. So marvellous had been the ministry that the Apostle himself is tempted to offer a more than lawful homage to the minister employed. As Cornelius once to an Apostle⁴, so here an Apostle to an Angel. But no: these things are dangerous: these homages beyond respect and reverence to created beings whether of human or angelic rank are unlawful and must not be. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen; and not holding the Head*⁵. *And*⁶ *he saith to me, See thou do it not: I am but a fellow-servant of thee and of thy brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this roll: worship God; but the order is more emphatic; to God pay thy worship.* Angels themselves are as far removed from God as His

¹ Acts iv. 20.² 2 Chron. xxvi. 5.³ 1 John i. 3.⁴ Acts x. 25.⁵ Col. ii. 18, 19.⁶ Verse 9.

human servants are : they are themselves the creation of His hands, and they recognize as their fellows and equals not only God's prophets, those, that is, who are employed to speak for Him to men, but all, high or low, rich or poor, who keep the words of His revelation. For Him reserve thy worship. The very Angels are but *ministers of His, who do His pleasure*¹.

*And² he saith to me, Seal not the words of the prophecy of this roll: the season is near; the time of their accomplishment is at hand. The prophet Daniel was taught an opposite lesson. Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days*³. But St John is not to seal his prophecy: the season of its fulfilment is near. Such is ever the difference between the prophecy of the Old and the prophecy of the New dispensation. The one belonged to a preliminary and prefatory state: the other to a complete and final condition. However long the Gospel age may have lasted or may yet continue, *it is the last time*⁴: after it there is none other: *then shall the end come*⁵.

Let⁶ the wrongdoer do wrong still; and let the foul man be defiled still: and let the righteous man do righteousness still; and let the holy man be hallowed still. The season of fulfilment is near: I am coming quickly. If a man will do wrong, he must: if a man will defile him-

¹ Psalm ciii. 21.² Verse 10.³ Dan. xii. 9, 12, 13.⁴ 1 John ii. 18.⁵ Matt. xxiv. 14.⁶ Verse 11.

self, he must : God will not interpose, God cannot consistently with man's nature or His own interpose, to force any man to repentance : *if a man will not turn*¹, if a man will *stop his ear*² against God's voice, if a man will disregard conscience, if a man will use the life which God has given, and the power which God has given, for wicked and ruinous purposes, it must be so : the day of reckoning is not yet ; and the day of reckoning would be made impossible if violence were done meanwhile to human will and to human choice. *Thus saith the Lord God, He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth to hear, let him forbear*³. *Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*⁴. It is a solemn statement of the responsibility of man. For the time, though God commands, He will not compel : though He calls, He will not constrain : *this is your hour*⁵; if you will destroy yourselves, you can. But you need not : God forbid that any man should so read the words before us as that they should say to the most sinful, *Sin on and die*. On that side also there is no compulsion. No man is forced to sin : every man is warned, every man is invited, every man is pleaded with by his God within and without; *I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Why will ye die? turn yourselves, and live ye*⁶. *But this I say, brethren, the time is short*⁷ ; *the season is near* : soon shall the defiled man be

¹ Psalm vii. 13 (Prayer-Book Version).

² Psalm lviii. 4.

³ Ezek. iii. 27.

⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 13.

⁵ Luke xxii. 53.

⁶ Ezek. xviii. 31, 32.

⁷ 1 Cor. vii. 29.

defiled for ever, and sin being finished bringeth forth death¹.

Behold², I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give back to each one as his work is. To give back. That is the meaning of retribution. It is the giving a man back just what he has done, the thing itself which he did; only not now in the germ or in the leaf, but in the full-blown unsightly flower, and in the ripe, the nauseous, and the noxious fruit. That is the judgment. It is the reaping of the thing sown. It is the *receiving back the things* themselves that were once *done in the body³*; receiving back the very acts and deeds themselves, only developed, full-grown, full-blown, ripened unto harvest.

I⁴ am the Alpha and the Omega, first and last One, the beginning and the end. I am He who was before the worlds, and who shall be to the countless ages. *In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God⁵. First and last One.* It is an attribute, an incommunicable attribute, of God Himself. *Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God⁶.*

Blessed⁷ are they who do His commandments, the commandments of Christ—for again the speaker changes—that their authority may hereafter be continuously over the tree of life, that they may have the right given them to

¹ James i. 15.

² Verse 12.

³ 2 Cor. v. 10.

⁴ Verse 13.

⁵ John i. 1.

⁶ Isai. xlii. 6.

⁷ Verse 14.

eat for ever of the tree of life, *and that they may have entered in*, may once for all enter in, *by means of the gate-towers*, that is, openly and without challenge, not surreptitiously or by *climbing up some other way*¹, *into the city*. Not all shall possess this privilege. *Without*², outside the heavenly city, are *the dogs*, those unclean and ravenous appendages of an eastern city, which are the type of all that is dissolute and rapacious in human nature ; *and the sorcerers*, those who use magical arts against the bodies and souls of men, the whole class of men who practise upon the credulity, and through it upon the innocence and happiness of their fellow-creatures ; *and the fornicators*, the immoral ; *and the murderers*, those who have either cherished or acted hatred, the murderer's spirit, against brother or fellow-man ; *and the idolaters*, those who have *worshipped and served the creature* in some one of its forms *more than the Creator*³, those who have cared more for the favour or for the approval or for the love of man than for that of God and of Christ ; *and every one loving and doing a lie*. How fearful a catalogue of the excluded ! of those who shall have to spend eternity together outside of heaven ! of those who without one element of charity or kindness, without pity or sympathy or any of those redeeming qualities which in this life may have mingled in the composition of the most sinful, shall be the companions of one another and of all lost and wicked spirits throughout the ages of an interminable age ! God grant that none of us be of them !

¹ John x. 1.² Verse 15.³ Rom. i. 25.

I¹ Jesus sent my angel—or it may be my messenger, the Apostle who wrote these things—to testify to you these things, even to the churches. I am the root and the race of David², the product of that root, the offspring of that race, even as it was written in the book of earlier prophecy; the star³, the bright, the morning star, ushering in a day altogether beautiful, altogether glorious. Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings⁴.

And⁵ the Spirit and the bride say, Come. The Spirit speaking in the Bride prays for the Bridegroom's coming; prays that the long night may end, the night of drowsiness and of expectation, and that the glorious day may dawn⁶; prays that the cry may soon reach the watching ear, summoning to trim the lamp for its last office, and to go out to meet Him, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh⁷! And let him that heareth echo that cry, and say, Come. And let him that thirsteth come; let him that is willing receive a water of life freely, as a gift, without money and without price⁸. The cry for a Saviour's coming must be accompanied by a coming to Him. It is not enough that the Bride which is the Church should be longing and praying for the Advent: she too herself, and every one of her earthly members, must be coming perpetually, while here below, to receive that water of life of which

¹ Verse 16.

² Num. xxiv. 17.

³ Verse 17.

⁷ Matt. xxv. 6.

² Isai. xi. 1, 10. Jer. xxiii. 5.

⁴ Mal. iv. 2.

⁶ Rom. xiii. 12.

⁸ Isai. lv. 1.

*whosoever drinketh shall never thirst*¹. Only he who comes to Christ can safely pray Christ to come to him.

I² testify to every one who heareth the words of the prophecy of this roll: If any one shall have laid on upon them, shall have added other words to them, God shall lay on upon him the strokes (plagues) which have been written in this roll: and³ if anyone shall have taken away from the words of the roll of this prophecy, God shall take away his share from the tree of life and out of the holy city which have been written (described) in this roll. Let us hear, and fear. What does he who puts upon this book vain and fanciful glosses? makes it speak of things trifling; or still worse, makes it speak things untrue to fact; or yet worse still, makes it *curse* those *whom God has not cursed*⁴, those whom prejudice and party-spirit alone have wilfully and uncharitably set up as foes? Does he not *add to the words of the prophecy*? And what again does he who closes his Bible at the Epistle of St Jude, and never studies or ponders the solemn and momentous pages which follow? does he not practically *take away from the words of the prophecy*, and forfeit at least the *blessing* of those who *keep*⁵ and love it? From these and all such errors on the right hand and on the left may God of His great mercy preserve us all!

He⁶ saith who testifieth these things, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Yea, I am coming quickly. Amen, such is the reply of the Apostle and of the Church of Christ, *come, Lord Jesus.*

¹ John iv. 14.

² Verse 18.

³ Verse 19.

⁴ Num. xxiii. 8.

⁵ Rev. i. 3.

⁶ Verse 20.

The¹ grace, the free favour and blessing, of the Lord Jesus be with all.

Not without some regret, my brethren, though I trust not without thankfulness also, can I bring to a close our meditations upon this Book. Would that the last of all might also be the best of all! the most full of thoughts of humility and godly fear, *of reproof, of correction, of instruction in righteousness²!*

There has indeed been much to humble us in the study of this Book. Many things in it we have found *hard to be understood³*. From many others we have returned, it may be, rather informed than edified. And on the whole we have found ourselves dull of comprehension and *slow of heart⁴* as to matters lying so far beyond the region of the present, matters demanding so much of lively faith and of deep devotion.

Even this experience may not have been vain or profitless. It shows us how far we are removed from the earnestness and from the simplicity of primitive times. It shows us how much we have yet to do and to suffer, every one of us, before we can recover that keen apprehension of realities *within the veil⁵*, of things unseen, unearthly, spiritual and eternal, which shall overcome in us the lowering and deadening influences of this world, and make us live in conscious strength *the life which is hidden with Christ in God⁶*. The Apocalypse, or the Book of Revelation, was designed, as its name imports, to be a work of uncovering and unveil-

¹ Verse 21.

² 2 Tim. iii. 16.

³ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

⁴ Luke xxiv. 25.

⁵ Heb. vi. 19.

⁶ Col. iii. 3.

ing ; of lifting off the obscuring cloud which rests upon God's counsels, and opening them to the full view of the Church and of the soul. Is it this to us? Has our consideration of it lifted off any such cloud for us? Do we understand at all better than before any of God's counsels and of God's purposes? Do we see, as once we saw not, what God is about in this present state of our being? or indeed that He is about anything; that He means anything and designs anything as the result and the issue of that strange yet commonplace procedure of events which we call *the course of this world*¹? It is a great thing when a man is brought to believe, as a matter not of doctrine but of conviction, that there is a God; that is, an eternal, almighty, all-wise, all-holy, ever-present, ever-acting Person, *whose he is*² and whose the world is, and who, instead of standing aside and letting nature or chance work on at their pleasure, has a hand over all these things and is guiding them with a purpose to an end. *The devils*, St James tells us, *believe that there is one God, and tremble*³: we too often believe that there is a God, but with a faith which neither rejoices nor trembles. Happy are we if the thought of a future, in its barest and most elementary form—a future which is in the hand of God, and of which two essential characteristics are the Advent and the Judgment—has been made in any degree more real to us by those varied and reiterated predictions of it with which our ears and our minds have during the

¹ Collect for 5th Sunday after Trinity.

² Acts xxvii. 23.

³ James ii. 19.

study of this Book been made so familiar! God give us all grace to receive into our hearts also that primary, that all-important revelation!

I have selected for one closing observation the remarkable verse read to you as the text. I have to-night passed over some sweeter and more beautiful words, partly because they have been virtually considered on former occasions, and partly because they are almost too divine in themselves to admit of human comment or enlargement. They are rather for silent pondering than for public exhortation. *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come: and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* With the text it is otherwise. On first hearing it we might start back as though it were not Scripture. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.* Can this be from the same Book which says, even in its earlier and less perfect teaching, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon*¹? Are we to read the passage before us as though it were in conflict with this holier and brighter message? as though it said, *Let the wicked keep his way, and the unrighteous man his thought: God desires his death: God will not pardon: it is too late: he must sin on, and die?* If not this, what does it say?

I rather draw from it a solemn lesson as to the

¹ Isai. lv. 7.

eventual stereotyping of human character. There comes a time, there will come a time to each one of us, when, whatever we are, that we shall be; when the seal of permanence will be set upon the spiritual condition; when the unjust man shall be unjust for ever, and the righteous man shall be for ever righteous.

I know of nothing more serious, in itself more alarming, than this reflection. There is no person in this congregation who does not wish, and faintly hope, that he may *die the death of the righteous*¹. There is no one now living in sin who does not intend at some future time to turn from it and be saved. And we all have great reliance upon the power of the human will. We all think that what we are we are because we choose so to be; and at all events that what we wish to be in the future we can be and we shall be. And we know from God's Word that we are to a great extent dealt with on this supposition. *To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart*². *Turn yourselves and live ye*³. And we know that in early years there is a great susceptibility of impressions. A death in a family, a sin discovered and punished, nay, a single sermon, has often, in God's hand, changed the course of a young life from evil to good. And it is so both ways. A particular companionship, casual in its origin, has led a young person into folly or worse than folly: the companionship is broken off as casually as it was formed; *the snare is broken* with it, and the young life *delivered*⁴.

¹ Num. xxiii. 10. ² Psalm xc. 7, 8. ³ Ezek. xviii. 32.

⁴ Psalm cxxiv. 6 (Prayer-Book Version).

And we observe a wonderful versatility and changeableness in that part of life. From year to year, almost from week to week, we have seen a vicissitude and an alternation. One week thoughtful, diligent, exemplary; the next week trifling, idle, and troublesome. One month an attentive hearer, a reverent worshipper: the next month uninterested in the things of God; a listless and languid listener; a careless, indifferent, almost profane member of the congregation. Thus the experience of one part of life seems almost to encourage the hope that the unjust man may not be unjust for ever; almost to suggest the fear that the righteous man may not be for ever righteous. And we cling to that hope, for others and for ourselves. I may spend, we say, forty or fifty years in sin and ungodliness, and yet have twenty or thirty years for *faith and calling upon God*¹. And the Christian minister, and the Christian man knows indeed no such thing as a limit or a terminus of God's mercy and of God's grace. He could not go about amongst his people, he could not visit the homes of the immoral or the dying, nay, he could not for himself bear the burden of life or combat the misgivings of unbelief, if he did not know that *with God nothing is impossible*², no hour too late and no case too desperate.

But we feel that there is also a truth, and a very solemn and needful truth, on the side of the text which speaks of the permanence, of the unchangeableness, of human character. *He which is filthy, let him be filthy*

¹ Article x.

² Luke i. 37.

still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. Yes, my brethren, for one man who changes, a thousand and a million change not. They pass on through life, and they end it even as they began. He who in childhood was a spoilt and wayward child, he who in boyhood was an idle and self-willed boy, he who in youth was a passionate and a dissolute young man, he who in manhood was a self-seeking and a worldly man, will probably be in old age an avaricious or a selfish or an irreligious old man, and in the end one who has *had his portion in this life*¹, has *received his good things* here, and must look only for *evil things* hereafter². The experience of life as a whole does not encourage the hope of many sudden changes, of many reversals of character, of many bad beginnings and good endings. As a general rule, the unjust man will be unjust still, and the righteous and holy will be holy and righteous still.

But at all events this will be true at a certain point, after a certain time. The connection of the words before us shows that it will be so as the end draws on. When Christ's coming is instant, there will be no change in human character. When the last conflict of which we have read so often in this Book once sets in, there will be no room and no time for changing sides. When the armies are once marshalled for that final encounter, there will be no fresh desertions and no new enlistments. The commanders will hold their troops well in hand, and *none shall break his rank*³ or exchange his service.

¹ Psalm xvii. 14.² Luke xvi. 25.³ Joel ii. 7.

Yes, my brethren, after a certain time the books will be finally made up, *the book of life*¹ and the book of death, and *a great voice as of a trumpet*² will be heard to say, *Henceforth he that is unclean must be unclean for ever: henceforth he that is holy shall be safely and for ever holy.* O fearful day for the one! O glorious and blessed hour for the other!

Let us, while we may—before that last edict is gone forth—if we are on the wrong side, change our side speedily. *The time is short*³: let *the past suffice us*⁴ for sin; let the time that is be made available for salvation. Not yet is the *throne set for judgment*⁵: at present it is *the throne of grace*⁶: let us come to it in great sorrow, *with strong crying and tears*, if so be we may be *heard in that we feared*⁷!

And if happily we have already crossed the line between death and life; if we have found mercy, and have begun to *walk in newness of life*⁸; then let us *look up, and lift up the head*⁹, in prospect of those *times of refreshing*¹⁰ when the word shall have been finally spoken, *He that is holy, let him be holy still.* O blessed consummation, when conflict shall be ended, and all shall be rest and peace! when we shall no longer fight each day as for life and death, but shall have upon our brow the impress of salvation, the seal which bears this inscription, *He is mine, saith the Lord*: he is righteous for ever: *let him*

¹ Rev. xx. 12.² Rev. i. 10.³ 1 Cor. vii. 29.⁴ 1 Pet. iv. 3.⁵ Psalm ix. 7. Dan. vii. 10. Rev. xx. 11.⁶ Heb. iv. 16.⁷ Heb. v. 7.⁸ Rom. vi. 4.⁹ Luke xxi. 28.¹⁰ Acts iii. 19.

be holy still: for him warfare is accomplished, for him iniquity is pardoned¹: He shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare him, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Then at last shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not².

¹ Isai. xl. 2.

² Mal. iii. 17, 18.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER,
May 25, 1862.

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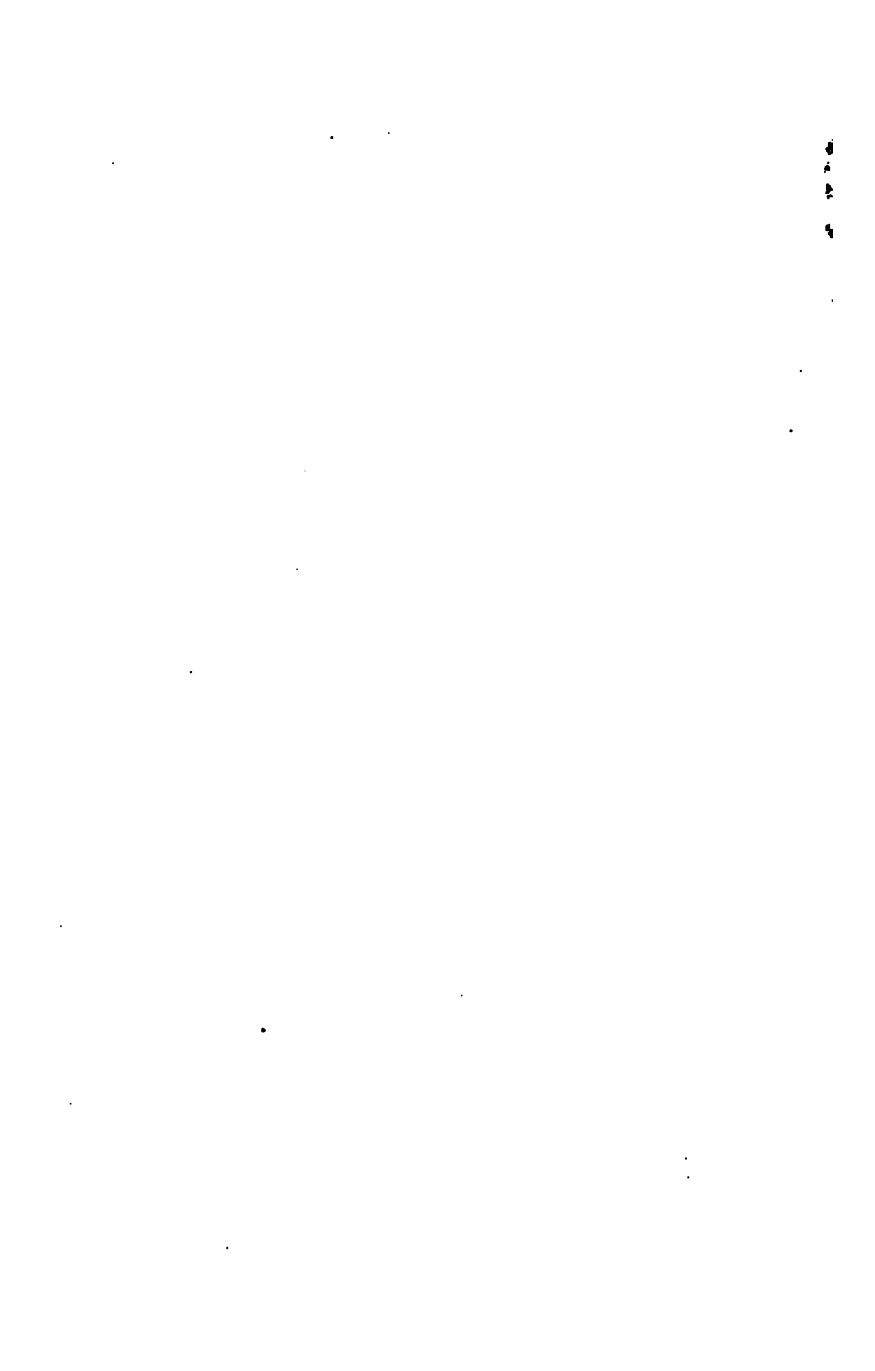
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